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STATESMAN

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- Romania's super Stalin
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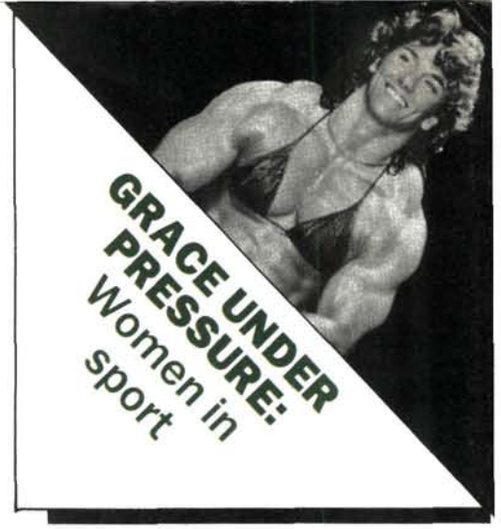
- Hiro on the Gulf
- Lenin, Mansfield and heterosexuality reviewed



GRACE UNDER PRESSURE: Women in sport

REINING IN THE CITY

'The Profligate Era is ending'

I.F. Stone

JOHN MINNION

Cover illustration: John Minnion

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WOODLAND TRUST

HURRICANE APPEAL

On October 16th, the worst storm on record savaged the South and East of Britain.

Thousands of mature trees were uprooted, and thousands more will have to be felled due to irreversible storm damage. Whole landscapes were destroyed.

Trust woods in Kent, Sussex and Norfolk were especially affected; one entire wood was virtually flattened and trees that have taken hundreds of years to grow were torn up in seconds.

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WARNING: Woods will remain dangerous until restoration work can be undertaken.

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 114 No 2953 30 October 1987

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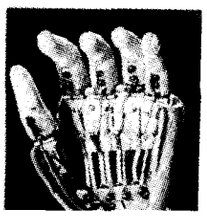
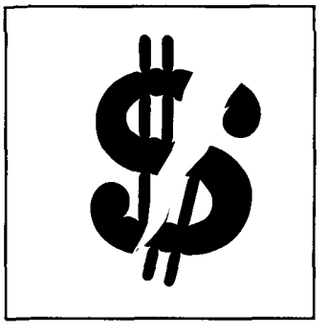


Feminist science fiction; what we can do with comprehensives; nuclear war at sea; the evasions of the black press

Openings for the left



YOU DO NOT have to be Tony Benn to believe that the events of the past week — not just those on the stock markets — may carry hopeful signals for the left. And no, it would not help. The crash of '87 is not the collapse of capitalism (nor was the crash of '29): the rhetoric at Chesterfield will not make it so.

The US economy is suffering from the consequences of a daft policy which President Reagan had hoped would not become critical till he left the White House. His gamble, to reduce taxes in order to stimulate so much economic activity that the global tax take would go up rather than down, has worked so ill that the budget deficit billowed to unknown heights. The deficit *has* come down, to $148bn in the fiscal year just ended from $221bn in the previous one: but that is still a huge drain and is anyway likely to rise again. Meanwhile, the trade deficit stood at $156bn last fiscal year and foreign indebtedness at $250bn. That couldn't continue: on Black Monday last week, the illusion of confidence ceased. Reagan now has to push up taxes or cut government spending: probably both.

To be sure — as many economists have argued — Reagan's policy came out as being a kind of Keynesianism by accident: a sharp contrast with the initially strict monetarism of his fellow Conservative, Margaret Thatcher, whose early declaration of war on inflation helped plunge Britain into a deeper recession than it needed even by the Prime Minister's own lights and drove unemployment up to levels unmatched in Europe.

But both governments were united in this 'insight': that the unemployment and/or poverty of a minority could be tolerated without paying a high political price — certainly not, necessarily, loss of office. As Professor Robert Solow argues in the current issue of Cambridge University's *Economic Policy*, both leaders have shifted the balance of power sharply in favour of wealthy people and their families: it has been this, rather than the much vaunted rolling back of the frontiers of the state, which has most distinguished their respective rules. In fact, the state accounts for rather more in terms of expenditure for both governments than it did when they took over: largely, in the case of the UK, because of unemployment benefits.

The lesson both have had to learn over the past two weeks is that the market solution cannot be trusted — and that when it cannot, they grasp gratefully and greedily at the instruments which leftists put there in the first place. When the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England opened the money sluices last week to ensure that interest rates went down, they were following the counsel of a dead economist, one J. M. Keynes: they simply could not live with that kind of behaviour from the market which reveals the unlovely sight of speculators rushing for the lifeboats, trampling each other underfoot in their panic. Yet that is indivisible from its nature: it is a side which has been turned away from the light, while that which has been presented for admiration has been the one which allocates resources inpersonally and efficiently.

The fright everyone has got from seeing the Mr Hyde of the market after getting used to Dr Jekyll for so long is the left's opportunity to push home the point it has made for much longer than its relatively modest, if newsworthy, dabbling with share ownership. The point is that, as Jack Straw argued in the *NS* last week, 'while the regulated market can help to produce wealth, it cannot distribute that wealth fairly, nor meet efficiently or fairly the needs of the people for social welfare in the widest sense.' The willingness of Conservative governments to intervene to stop financial anarchy in the markets is a powerful philosophical and political lever to use against our government's continued refusal to intervene to bring down unemployment and alleviate poverty.

SUCH WAS THE excitement in the markets that we could be forgiven for missing the other crisis which might prove of use to the left: that of the royal marriage. Charles and Diana have spent much of the past five weeks apart: he tending to Balmoral, she eking out an existence on their inner city estate. It is a sad reflection on our times that a husband is forced to find work more than 500 miles from home: but most of the victims of this modern phenomenon do seem to manage to pay conjugal visits every weekend. You don't have to be the *Sun* to find something to speculate on here.

We have argued in the *NS* before that the combination of a bad marriage and the relentless pressure of the tabloids may reduce the younger royals to a state approaching ridicule: the present position of the Prince is somewhat analogous to the US stock market a few months ago — a grossly inflated position, clearly heading for a crash unless corrective action is taken.

That's good. A sharp correction in their position, down to the tenancy of a modest town house and the public riding of bikes would be just the thing we need. It would serve as an introduction to the constitutional reforms — on the House of Lords, on the voting system — that any radical government must yet undertake. It's a pity to see someone as jolly nice as Prince Charles have a rough time: but lots of his subjects have had to make sacrifices for the good of their country.

John Lloyd

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DIARY

Berlin

THE PLAINCLOTHES policeman lurked at Harwich passport control, dressed in a dull brown suit, duller brown shirt and beige tie. The return train journey to East Berlin goes through ten borders, but it was only in my own country that I was bothered by officialdom.

'Name,' he demanded, together with my passport number, destination and date of return. I complied and he scribbled the information down in a tatty notebook. 'Who are you?' I asked. 'Police officer,' he snarled.

○

It's just one stop on the U-Bahn from Kochstrasse to Stadtmitte station but it's a journey that exists only on a (West) Berlin subway map and in the fading memories of the city's veteran residents.

The trains don't stop for six stations after Kochstrasse as they hurtle under the wall and the Soviet zone. They slow down as they pass through eerie abandoned stations, unused since 1961 when the wall went up, as if to say to the passengers 'look at this lot — what a lucky escape you had'. A few tourists gawp at the two or three armed guards patrolling the empty platforms, guarding against kamikaze commuters or defectors trying to escape under rather than over the wall.

The grey concrete scar that slices the city is Berlin's best-known asset. You can walk right up to it on the Western side — it's quite easy to climb over. It's the minefields, armed guards with a clear field of fire for hundreds of yards and the patrolling jeeps full of soldiers on the Eastern side that are the problem.

But the wall is essentially static. People go to look and gaze at it and think deep historical thoughts. Some try to jump or fly over. Occasionally an East German border guard strolls across and into a bar to announce his defection. The U-Bahn is a much better metaphor for the division of Europe. Here there are trains taking passengers to and through stations on the same line, in the same city, but in and out of different countries.

○

Berlin is the only great European capital to be sliced in half, but the wall is not its only division. On the Kurfurstendamm, the city's Regent Street, an endless stream of BMWs and Mercedes cruises up and down the wide road. Well-dressed locals and comfortably off tourists gaze into the sparkling windows of the street's expensive shops. Here, in a city whose great buildings are still comprehensively pockmarked by World War II bullet and shell-holes, is the evidence of the German economic miracle.

The other Berlin, where you would find today's Christopher Isherwood, is Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg's Ku-damm is Oranienstrasse, where second-hand clothes shops fight for space with art galleries, bars and clubs. It's probably the last place in Europe where the spirit of 1960s politics lives on. The walls are plastered with Mao posters and right-on slogans aimed at the area's Turks and students: 'German and Turkish women unite and fight the real enemy — Patriarchy.'

Young people from all over West Germany flock to Berlin to study, avoid military service, drop-out, or all three. 'This is the only Latin city in northern Europe,' explains Dieter, a musician in his early 20s, as he sips a beer at Oranienstrasse's Bar Homo. For him Berlin is simultaneously Europe's most intense and most relaxed city. 'It's funny that it takes a wall to make me feel free,' grins Dieter. 'But this place is a huge pressure cooker — its isolation and the wall keeps it bubbling over.'

And Dieter's got some ideas for the future, although they seem to draw on the past: 'America wants West Germany and Russia wants East Germany, so we stay divided. But think what we could do if we united, think what we could do for Europe!'

○

To be a Jew in Berlin is to be a victor of sorts, especially when standing on the flat grass where once stood the city's most feared address, the Gestapo headquarters on Prinz Albrecht-Strasse. The building has gone, and all that remains is one excavated cell and the storage cellars. Now, on the city's 750th birthday, it has been turned into a museum.

The exhibition is neatly laid out and comprehensively lives up to its title, 'The Topography of Terror'. It chronicles the Nazis' rise, their rule and their policies — although there is no section on homosexuals. It explains how the Nazis, methodical as ever, had 18 categories for death and concentration camp prisoners, including five sub-sections for Jews (e.g. anti-social elements, politicals and returning emigrants). Even so, at the end of the war there were still 6,000 Jews alive in the city, many sheltered for years by the underground. There's about the same number now, and another 300 in the East, but 3,000 are refugees from the Soviet Union who have chosen West Berlin as a natural compromise.

Several Germans were poring over files full of forms detailing the bureaucracy of terror and genocide. Perhaps they were searching in the Gestapo's records for the names of relatives among the hundreds of thousands of Germans who died fighting fascism.

○

The bars and cafés on East Berlin's main street, the Unter der Linden are full. Moscow may rule, but there's none of the Soviet capital's surly indifference to the pleasures of leisure. The older customers are well-dressed in stylish well-made clothes and the gaggles of punks, skinheads and hippies wouldn't merit a second glance in Camden or the King's Road.

But you won't see them there. Travel outside the Eastern bloc is virtually impossible and they know what they're missing out on. Heinz is a designer with his own spacious, and central, turn-of-the-century flat where he lives with his wife and two children. 'I'd love to go to Paris and London but at the moment I can't. I don't want to leave East Germany but I'd like to see the other side of Europe.'

He is cynical about Gorbachev and *glasnost*: 'I think it's all public relations for the Western press. But he's better than nothing.' The Socialist Unity (Communist) Party is run by ageing men, with few young people joining. Many are like Heinz, alienated from state-run politics.

But apparatchiks and old-age pensioners are allowed out. The old people cross at Friedrichstrasse station. Tearful goodbyes are usually followed by searches by East German customs officers inside to remind them who is boss. The opposite platforms are in different countries with white lines marking the border. It's actually very confusing where the Allied zone ends and the Soviet zone begins, but I'm sure the armed East German guards, sitting exactly above and between the rails would know when to start shooting.

Adam LeBor

Adam LeBor travelled to Berlin by train, courtesy of Transalpino. He is editor of Fairly Serious Monthly.

ROGER WODDIS

Things falling apart

'Only a week earlier the Government had appeared to be walking on water, proclaiming an economic miracle and the final defeat, via popular capitalism, of socialism in our time.' — The Observer

Nobody foresaw a break in the weather.
The glass was set fair and the satellite picture
Gave promise of endless golden days.
In the early hours, their lulled sleep shattered,
They heard the crash of falling trees.

It was a freak storm, they said.
The watchers of screens were caught unawares:
Blame the computers, foreign markets,
Phones that failed. It couldn't happen again,
Not like that, raining stocks and shares.

There was no need for panic.
Floods could be mopped up; the ruined farm
Was soon restored and the uprooted trunks
Were a godsend to the furniture trade.
It was purely a question of reform.

Total change is surely not the answer:
That would only infuriate the clouds
And goad the gale into greater chaos.
Better to crouch low and hope your whistle
Can be heard above the wind.

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BEN PIMLOTT

What now for the get-rich-quick mood of the mid-eighties?

'THE ACTUAL private object of the most skilled investment today,' wrote a famous stock market gambler, 'is to "beat the gun", as the Americans so well express it, to outwit the crowd, and to pass the bad, or depreciating half-crown to the other fellow.' The gambler's name was Maynard Keynes. One happy by-product of the 1987 Global Village Crash could be to bring the Bloomsbury reprobate back into fashion.

There has been no shortage of explanations after, or even during, the event. The simplest is the 'bigger fool' theory, one writer's refinement of Keynes's 'beating the gun'. People go on buying shares greedily and foolishly for as long as they believe that there are others greedier and fool-hardier than themselves. Then the fools run out.

Between January and August, Dow Jones rose 40 per cent in a country where the ratio of federal debt to GNP had increased from a third to a half in seven years. So what could you expect? The fact is that few people did expect it, otherwise it would never have happened. That is the point about stock market crashes. It is also something which should make us wary of the latest expert projections. Meanwhile commonsense indicates one thing. The fastest dissipation of financial vapour since the South Sea Bubble has blown away the centrepiece of the Tory programme as surely as forced devaluation did for Labour in 1967.

For the moment, the normal rituals surrounding stock exchange disasters will be observed. These may be summed up under the heading: Nothing Has Changed. This in itself, however, involves a dangerous contortion. On the one hand, business as usual is the order of the day. On the other, there is a flurry of activity aimed at limiting the damage.

Ministers who have been leading evangelists of the free market idea, and who have not been averse to the occasional flutter themselves, have suddenly become very pompous on the subject of the trade in equities. They share the view of the Director-General of the CBI, that much of it is 'candyfloss', without solid basis in the real world. According to the Chancellor, the behaviour of the stock exchanges has been 'rather absurd'. In a twinkling King Market has been dethroned. We are now advised to regard the ex-monarch as a untrustworthy fantasist, the purveyor of misleading gossip.

Officially, the economy is strong. Mr Lawson appeared on television the other night to tell us so. The growth rate is high (forget the abysmal early Thatcher years). Inflation is low (forget the unemployed). Manufacturing output has climbed back to where it was when Labour left office. 'There is nothing in the business situation to justify nervousness,' says Nigel Lawson. Oops, sorry. Actually the remark was made by the President of the Continental Illinois Bank at roughly the same stage in 1929. But never mind. The Chancellor's gist was much the same.

'Perhaps never before or since,' wrote J. K. Galbraith of the inter-war disaster, 'have so many people taken the measure of the economic prospects and found them so favourable.' *Plus ça change*. The trouble is that they can be right and wrong at the same time. Mr Lawson, who was happy enough to take some of the credit for the bull, dismisses the bear as not his responsibility. It is all the Americans' fault — for having a deficit, for having a President who cannot string together a coherent sentence, for confidence-destroying mishaps in the Middle East. Unfortunately, that won't help us if the American sneeze is big enough — whether or not the British economy has become tough as nails.

Which of course it hasn't. Though better in some respects, it remains perilously flawed in others. Edward Heath's question — 'What economic miracle?' — remains worryingly apt. It is not just that recovery has been bought at a terrible price to the former industrial heartlands. It is also that recovery remains extremely brittle. Roy Hattersley's Jeremiah warnings of balance of payments difficulties, delivered at election time and therefore universally disregarded, could still prove correct. The rise in British manufacturing output has not been matched by growth in exports. Oil prices peaked last year: this year, North Sea Oil's contribution to UK balance of payments will have dropped by a third. Despite Chesterfield euphoria, the crisis of capitalism is not at hand. But a second, homegrown London crash, followed by a serious economic downturn, has become a lot more likely.

> ***'Few people expected it, otherwise it would never have happened. That is the point about stock market crashes'***

Whether there is another, deeper slump or not, the crash is bound to become a political, as much as an economic, marker. October 1987 will be remembered as the month in which the government had to give up buying electoral support with large sums of speculative money.

In retrospect, it was all so easy. The soaring of the index made successive privatisations wildly popular with an ever-growing army of prospering punters; and popularity encouraged the government to print more bits of paper which doubled in the value in the grateful voters' hands. In 1983 shareownership, concentrated among an exclusive 5 per cent, was not electorally significant; in 1987, distributed among 23 per cent (half of whom lived in the South East and Midlands and two-thirds of whom were lower-middle or working class), it had emphatically become so. It was a clever wheeze but it won't work again. The happy game of national monopoly in which there were only winners has vanished. Whatever happens over BP, we need expect no U-turns in privatisation policy. But it is unlikely that new issues will ever be launched with the same ideological razzamatazz, the naked appeal to avarice, as in the past.

Will some of the get-rich-quick, something-for-nothing mood of the mid-eighties begin to shift? It is possible. Certainly the rest of Thatcherism had already been changing. Monetarism is the obvious example. It was the government's loss of interest in M3, floating exchange rates, strict adherence to spending targets, not its earlier obsession with them, that contributed to growth. Recently we have had currency devaluations, tax-cuts to stimulate the economy and old-style fine tuning. What Galbraith has said of the US ('we have had irresponsible Keynesianism in these last years from the Reagan administration') applies increasingly here. The reaction of both governments to the crash provides further evidence that monetarism survives only in the ivory tower of right-wing seminars. Monetarists would have imposed a squeeze — as happened in 1929, with catastrophic results. In 1987, both the Americans and British cut interest rates on a principle of which Keynes would have approved: if businesses are in trouble, let them borrow.

Monetarism is a handy doctrine for a dominant economy, like Britain in the nineteenth century, or for a yuppy one, like Japan today. In more mellow, problematic countries it rapidly proves unworkable, and the resulting contradictions in policy help to create international uncertainty. One American economist has argued that the world is economically happiest when it knows who's boss: before the First World War, Britain was clearly in charge, and after the Second, America. Chaos arose between the wars because nobody was sure where economic power really lay. Arguably, we are back there now.

For Thatcherism, what is there left? Not much, except the radical right-wingery of union-bashing, school-disrupting and a refusal to spend money to create services and jobs. Previously, these fitted into a grand scheme, the Big Idea. Doubtless some domestic policies in the pipeline will still get popular support. But now that the Big Idea has popped, there will be plenty of people asking whether so-called gains in public 'freedom' are worth the sacrifices in health, schools, benefits and employment.

Tory hegemony is too strong a fortress to fall at one knock, especially when there are four years ahead in which to rebuild the ramparts. Nevertheless, for the first time since Labour bungled its Westland chances, it is possible to foresee a different landscape. 'The jig is up,' Max Gordon telephoned to Marx (Groucho) when prices tumbled in 1929. Keynes put it more suavely in *The General Theory*: 'Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation.' Millions of people, some with fingers badly singed, have suddenly had enough of speculation. It is a good week for Labour to begin its policy review. □

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A dirty job?

ONE OF THE defendants in the London ANC kidnap plot met Margaret Thatcher during the 1984 miners' strike, according to testimony given to the police.

Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Squad interviewed the youngest defendant, who claimed to be 'John Larsen', but is believed to be a Norwegian mercenary named Hans Christian Dahl with a 'service' record in Southern Africa.

For reasons best known to the Squad, Larsen was asked if he knew Margaret Thatcher. He replied that of course he knew her; she was a famous woman. But the police pursued the question doggedly, and as the transcript — which I have seen — shows, he eventually mentioned the meeting.

In the absence of a direct admission from Larsen, the police drew the conclusion that his task at the time was to 'shadow' Arthur Scargill. Of course, the questions remains: at whose orders? Counsel for three of the original four defendants, Benjamin Conlon, was quoted two weeks ago as saying that his clients were involved with the British government 'at the highest level', something which the Attorney General, Sir Patrick Mayhew, uneasily denied in the House of Commons last week.

In seems strange that the charges were dropped at all when there was clearly a *prime facia* case against at least three of the defendants. It is clear that, because of potential embarrassment, not just of the Thatcher connection but of an entire web of covert intergovernmental contacts, mutual security services' co-operation and the use of mercenaries for 'dirty' jobs, a deal with the Crown Prosecution Service *was* done.

One of the three people named in the 2000 documents seized by police in the course of their investigation was Colonel Rob Crowther, Military Attaché at the South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square. Despite official denials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, sources there confirm that his departure was directly a result of his involvement in this case, although it was thought unwise to make a public issue of it.

Since the replacement of John Vorster by P.W. Botha as prime minister the balance of power in South African intelligence circles has shifted dramatically. The old BOSS has been eclipsed by military men, especially in overseas operations, as part of Botha's determined reliance on his old cronies from the Defence Ministry, many of whom favour the use of mercenaries, as in recent hit jobs in various front line states against ANC members.

It all suggests that not just the South African government, but our own as well, indulge in the use of 'freelancers' for covert operations, even within our own shores; that there is a closer involvement between the two countries' intelligence services than would ever be admitted (and than Sir Geoffrey Howe would be happy with, even if Mrs Thatcher is), and that the highest level of this third triumphal administration needs close probing about the highly moral 'Victorian values' it claims to operate by.

David Tereshchuk

David Tereshchuk has reported on Southern Africa for TV and in print for 15 years.

The right in retreat?

HAVE THE Conservatives achieved a permanent shift to the right in country's political values? Not according to the latest report of the annual British Social Attitudes survey, published this week.* On the contrary, says the survey's political analyst John Curtice, there was a shift to the left among the electorate between 1983 and 1985 and the new figures show that, although the Tories became a bit more popular in 1986, this was not because there was more support for their political values.

It is too early to know if this is confirmed by the 1987 survey, conducted just before the election (its results have not yet been processed), but the 1986 figures suggest that the Conservatives may have won their landslide because of voters' confidence in their handling of the economy — despite being out of tune with the country's political values.

The 1986 survey found a small rise in the number of Conservative identifiers from 31 to 34 per cent, but because there was no change in underlying values, Curtice looks for other explanations for the change. He concludes that there was a 'sharp improvement in the electorate's evaluation of the economic situation between 1985 and 1986', and suggests that this increased support for the government regardless of the voters' ideological position. For example, among those who agreed that employees need strong trade unions, only 10 per cent of those who *also* expected prices to 'go up a lot' supported the Tories — but 38 per cent of those who expected prices to 'go down' were Tory supporters.

Earlier British Social Attitudes surveys showed that the underlying political values which distinguish most sharply between Conservative and Labour supporters are related to equality, and the role of trade unions and the government in pursuing it. Alliance supporters tend to be somewhere in the middle, but closer to the Tory end of the spectrum. They also isolated a separate cluster of questions, relating to civil liberties, which differentiate most sharply between Tories on the one hand and Labour and Alliance supporters on the other.

Last year's report found a shift away from the right-wing end of both spectrums between 1983 and 1985. There was also a move away from the Tories on a number of more specific issues, such as unemployment and nuclear weapons. The 1986 survey shows a further sharp move in opinion against US nuclear missiles (60 per cent thought they 'make Britain less safe', up 7 points on 1985), and a gentler continuation of the trend against British nuclear weapons (37 per cent thought they make Britain less safe, up 3 points). But this was probably a reaction to the US raid on Libya launched from British bases and the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, which both happened during the survey, rather than a further shift to the left in underlying values. The level of support for unilateral nuclear disarmament, at 28 per cent, was not significantly changed.

Curtice elaborated this analysis in a paper he and the other authors of the psephologists' bible, *How Britain Votes*, wrote last month. In it they demonstrate that people who changed their party loyalty between 1983 and the autumn of 1986 *didn't generally change their political values: what* did change dramatically was their perceptions of party image and party leaders.

So, are changes in party affiliation more or less independent of underlying, long-term political 'values'? Or does the British Social Attitudes series focus on the wrong values? Something *dramatic happened between the fieldwork for this* report in April/May 1986, and 11 June 1987, and there are only faint hints of it in this report.

One is Curtice's 'economic override' of ideology; another might be touched on by the chapter on the welfare state. Despite the popularity of 'universal' welfare services, people covered by private health insurance are markedly less likely to cite the National Health Service as the top priority for extra public spending. And the survey records majorities in favour of letting people who can afford it pay for better health care (53 per cent) as opposed to it 'should be the same for everyone' (46 per cent), education (52 per cent

* *Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon and Lindsay Brook (editors),* British Social Attitudes: the 1987 report, *published by Gower for Social and Community Planning Research, £28.50 and £12.50.*

If the caption fits

No 41

For all you fans of royalty (well, semi-royalty) we give you this unique picture of Princess Margaret's ex and the King of Gossip Columns, Nigel Dempster. Could it be that certain *minor* bit-players in The Show are being forced to *beg* for publicity? Captions, thinks or speech bubbles to reach us at the *NS* by Monday 2 November.

Winner: No 39

Derek Jameson: 'You can let go now Cynthia, they'll crop the photo anyhow.' (*Aaron Scharf, Melton Constable.*)

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versus 47 per cent) and pensions (61 per cent versus 36 per cent).

John Rentoul

Taxing time for Reagan?

Washington

'NO NEW TAXES. PERIOD' is the message pinned on the wall of the Office of Tax Analysis at the US Treasury. Sent in by a concerned citizen, it is a view the President shares.

President Reagan's antipathy to tax increases is well known: he said that taxes would go up 'over his dead body', and he told Congress that any attempts they make to raise taxes would be vetoed by him 'as fast as it takes my secretary to type V-E-T-O'. But even before the New York stock market crash persuaded the President to think again, tax increases were preordained. The difficulty was in finding an acceptable and face-saving way to introduce them.

It is just a year since President Reagan signed the Tax Reform Act of 1986. US tax reform has not only been enormously popular with the great majority of American taxpayers, it has become a guiding light for tax reform throughout the industrialised world. Raising taxes now — a year before the final phase of the Tax Reform Act is due to be implemented — would be an about-turn of enormous proportions.

In the run-up to the election in 1988, it could also be politically damaging. Tax reform in the US has been heralded as a triumph for the 'little guy' over big business. Successful campaigning by organisations such as Citizens for Tax Justice had incited public outrage over the corporate freeloaders who paid less tax than the people employed to polish their floor. The biggest of these, AT&T, paid no tax at all between 1982 and 1985 on profits of almost $25bn and received tax refunds from the government totalling $636 million.

The Tax Reform Act clobbered the corporate freeloader. It closed loopholes and shut tax shelters, putting an end to the '3-martini lunch' and other tax privileges enjoyed by the wealthy. It took millions of low-paid workers out of tax altogether.

Given a President who was such a friend to the rich and a Congress so heavily supported by special-interest contributions that it was called 'the best Congress money can buy', the Tax Reform Act was a truly remarkable achievement.

Its passage came about as the result of an unholy alliance of interests and the inescapable allure of tax cuts to politicians interested in making popular promises. US tax reform combined the abolition of corporate and special-interest tax breaks with cuts in tax rates across the board. Treasury economists, who dreamed up the original version, liked it because it redressed a huge imbalance in the US tax system: 'Tax expenditures' cost the Treasury more in lost revenue than was collected in individual income taxes. Liberal reformers liked it because it widened the tax base, shifted taxes to the corporate sector and closed loopholes for the rich. Conservative supply-siders liked it because it cut top rates of tax and boosted incentives for the 'wealth creators'. The American electorate loved it.

It would take a brave politician, therefore, to stand between the American people and tax cuts. President Reagan cannot like the prospect of stepping into the firing line.

There can be no easy way for him. If the budget deficit is to be reduced credibly, more tax revenues are needed. But his office will do their best to ensure that the blame for both tax increases and public expenditure is placed squarely on the Democratic Congress.

The President is a firm supporter of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollins law to achieve target reductions in the budget deficit. Yet in his own budget last January, Reagan asked for a 3 per cent real increase in defence spending. When Congress proposed a compromise figure, conditional on a tax increase of $19.3bn to help pay for it, the President said he would never accept it.

Reagan will continue his public stand against tax rises. But more quietly, he has already agreed to 'revenue enhancers' worth some $15bn which extend the tax take by 'technical' changes (such as taxing tips). He wants budget cuts, and has told the press that 'everything is up for grabs' except social security. But privately the Treasury admit that social security may be 'on the table' before long.

The President is trapped between unpleasant choices — more taxes, unpopular cuts, less defence money — and an election looms. He must act to calm the markets, but will wish to do so in a way which leaves Congress carrying the can.

Emma MacLennan

Britain mistreats its 'flexible friends'

'I WOULD LIKE to think that we have finally scotched the idea that social rights for workers should be enshrined in community legislation,' Employment Minister John Lee told a slightly uncomfortable audience of personnel managers last week.

The government is pleased that it has for the past five years managed to block a European Community Directive on Voluntary Part-Time Work which would give 12 million part-timers throughout the EC protection against discrimination on pay and employment rights. Yet Britain has the largest part-time labour force in Europe — now up to nearly five million and growing rapidly: 40 per cent of all part-timers in the European Community. Most are women and, in Britain, most are poorly paid. Four out of five — on the Department of Employment's own figures — earn less than the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold' for wages of £3.25 an hour.

Unlike most other EC countries, Britain fails to provide part-timers with equal access to even the most basic employment rights — protection against unfair dismissal, maternity rights and redundancy payments. If you work less than 16 hours a week in Britain, you qualify for none of these rights until you have worked for the same employer for at least five years (many of the small firms that employ part-timers are lucky if they survive for that long themselves). If you work less than eight hours a week, you are entitled to none of these basic rights, no matter how long you stay with the same employer.

The European Directive would have ended that

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discrimination, ensuring that part-timers were entitled to the same rights as full-time workers. When the Directive was proposed in 1982, five of the nine EEC countries accepted it and three wanted modifications before giving it the go ahead. Only the UK stood in outright opposition to the principle of 'non-discrimination' embedded in the Directive — sufficient to torpedo the plan altogether.

In the Netherlands, where the drive for 'flexibility' through the use of part-timers has developed even more aggressively than it has in Britain, a system of 'on call' working has developed, with 'flexible' and temporary contracts. Workers are told at short notice whether they will be needed on a particular day or shift. The signs are that firms will soon catch on to the potential for this type of casualised employment in Britain.

The advantages of flexibility for part-timers themselves are more doubtful. Certainly, given the paucity of child-care facilities, many women do find part-time work the only option. And the number of teenagers working part-time has increased from just 6 per cent in 1979 to 25 per cent today, as the opportunities for full-time work recede further. Yet part-timers pay a heavy price, in low wages and poor working conditions, for their share of the 'flexibility'.

Low-pay and part-time work are not inevitable accompaniments, as Norman Tebbit will shortly find when he joins the ranks of part-timers on the boards of companies throughout industry. And while the Netherlands represents a warning of what might happen if Britain moves further down the path of 'deregulation', Sweden offers an alternative model. An even higher proportion of the workforce than in Britain works part-time, and employers get the flexibility for which they yearn. Yet part-timers themselves are well-protected in terms of employment rights, including parental leave, and there is a vigorous pursuit of equal opportunities.

Over the past eight years the government has been busily dismantling the somewhat rickety structure of employment rights which existed in the late 1970s. And more 'deregulation' is in the pipeline. A White Paper published last year (*Building Businesses . . . Not barriers*) warned that workers employed for less than 12 hours a week (against the current limit of 8 hours) would be entitled to no protection against unfair dismissal and would have no rights in redundancy or maternity. Those working less than 20 hours will have to be employed by the same firm for five years before qualifying for such rights. And firms with fewer than 10 employees will not be required to reinstate women after childbirth. Half a million women will have no maternity rights at all.

These 'technical' changes will mean that over a quarter of the entire workforce — the majority of them women — will be unprotected by unfair dismissal, maternity and redundancy rights. Nearly two million of them will be part-timers.

Jennifer Hurstfield and Chris Pond

Jennifer Hurstfield's report, Part-timers under pressure, *was published last week and is available from the Low Pay Unit, 9 Upper Berkeley St., London W1.*

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Poop-poop

POOP-POOP. Poop-poop. But this is turbo-charged, four-wheel-drive, electric aerial, time-delay interior courtesy, teak-inlay with a gorgeous, pouting model on the bonnet, heaven. The Earl's Court exhibition cavern is given over entirely to the worship of the Motor Car God. Gleaming Jaguars, twinkling Hondas, low-slung, farouche Ferraris, velvety Volvos: all brightly-burnished and not a wheel-clamp unit, meter maid or spot of rust in sight. The only sin of omission: there's no emissions, no lung-punching exhaust muck to pollute this internal combustion paradise. It's a completely static celebration of the cult of speed. Velocity, we adore you. Praise The Ford, And Pass The Hit-and-Run Victim.

And who's this at the Ford stand, whispering seductive sweet somethings at the new Granada Ghia X? A dodgy-looking gent in slicked down hair, natty blue suit, discreetly-patterned tie and patent leather black shoes with two tassels demurely playing peek-a-boo from his trouser bottoms, he certainly looks familiar. Poop-poop! It's Cecil Parkinson, of course, doing his oily bit — and why not? he *is* energy minister — for Motorfair '87.

And Cecil's off, double-declutching, dropping down the box a little, picking up speed, swerving around a chicane of fat men in suits, moving fast now before a stylish handbrake turn brings him skidding to a halt at the next photo-opportunity, the Jaguar stand. He poses in front of a snakesbelly grey Jaguar Sovereign 3.6 and silkily chats to a not-particularly-prosperous-looking punter, playing at being a buyer, who sits grinning like a Chevrolet grill behind the wheel. The cameras click-click their benison and the minister swishes smoothly away, the only sound you can hear being the tick-tock of his political popularity clock. The punter is 25-year-old Alex Harden from Ashford in Kent. The *New Statesman* asks Alex the only question worth asking. Would you buy a second-hand car from that man? Disappointingly, he replies: 'I don't see why not.' If only one worked for the *Sun*.

And now the Cecil-limousine is purring in front of a 'Silk Cut' Jaguar XJR8, adorned with promoters' tags and dressed up in purple, yellow, white finery with green piping: a 230-mph truss on wheels, the ultimate speed freak's wet-dream. While the minister proudly straps a 'World Champion' garland across his chest, a plaque volunteers the information that the chassis construction is monocoque. Mono*what*? That at least is a question for Cecil at his press conference.

He's off again, his Civil Service outriders darting in front, as he slip-streams through the heavy show traffic, jumping the queue to make the lift to the press centre. In the lift one of the outriders tells him, mysteriously, 'the pile-driver is on', to which Cecil replies: 'It's all right. I've done it before, but you'd better have good insurance.'

The press conference turns out to be an opportunity for the hacks to admire the minister's spotless bonnet, racy styling and enjoy a quick glance at his speedo. He revs up: 'The dog days of the British motoring industry are behind it. I have found this show very encouraging and reassuring.'

Well, somebody's got to ask him a proper question. 'Minister, the *Independent* has pointed

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out that while a number of Japanese firms have new models at the show, Austin Rover has none. Is that encouraging?'

The minister tootled along, taking the third on the right, left at the product range roundabout, left again, doubled-back on himself on manufacturing quality, right again on performance and said it was. Next question: why did the minister stand next to a 230mph motor car? Surely the cult of speed causes carnage on the roads?

'That's not for road usage. It's designed for the track. I got quite a kick out of standing next to that car.' So, minister, you wouldn't recommend it, say, to a member of the Royal Family? The Cecilmobile throttled back. 'I get temporary deafness when anyone mentions the Royal Family. You won't get me to comment on that.' And with a flurry of unction-fumes he was gone. I had forgotten to ask about the monocoque.

Cecil's departure left the show as interesting as a traffic jam on the Birmingham Inner Ring Road. Fat men in suits predominated, whispering about Datsun dealerships on offer into their portable Voda-phones, but there were also a number of thin men in suits; many of the stands featured dolled-up women who looked bored out of their minds.

Perched mermaid-like on the back of a Mitsubishi Amphibious Shogun was Jackie Crossley, wearing a velcro-smile and a one-piece pink and black swimming cossie, working a ten-to-five shift, with an hour off for lunch. The favourite chat-up line of the punters was: 'Do you come free with the car?' She had heard it, 'ph, probably more than 30 times today'. There must be easier ways of earning a living.

Upstairs a throng had gathered in front of a minor TV personality, doing a piece to camera in front of a mock-vintage van. Blond hair, easy manner, his eyes twin pools of meaninglessness as he spoke his verbal confection. A Chegwin, A Noakes? A lesser Dimbleby, perhaps? Someone in the crowd said it was Mike Smith, and perhaps it was. And on, to lust after a racing green Morgan and stare at a Lamborghini so expensive that the VAT alone would set you back £10,718.75.

At the *Daily Mail* stand, the Windsor Buick, once owned by King Edward VIII, pirouetted in slow motion, to the accompaniment of six different rock, heavy metal and soul sounds from nearby stereo companies. Loud music and a luxury limousine, twin icons of late twentieth-century capitalism, taken together could well produce a migraine in five to ten minutes. Watching the car rotate and hearing the battling walls of sound was like something out of *The Ipcress File*.

And, finally, to gawk at the Bugatti Royale, which Christie's hope will fetch a cool £5 million when they auction it in November: a long black penis of a motor car, hand-tooled and ivory-knobbed for the envy of mere millionaires. And beautiful too. For once a press pass comes in handy and I skip over the security wall, just to look at the speedo. And that's the great secret of the most expensive, most sought-after car in the world. It hasn't got one.

John Sweeney

John Sweeney drives a rusty Honda Accord, with a bad wheel shudder.

POLITICAL SKETCH

Seamless universe of the House of Commons

Edward Pearce

THE NICE THING about the House of Commons is that it doesn't change. Half of Sussex may have been blown away, the Kondratief cycle may have been vindicated just as Labour was adjusting to the notion of share ownership, but life in the Commons seems like a self-renewing cell structure.

Here is Mr Terence Higgins expressing amazement that the government can contemplate the EC food bill going up again; here is Denis Healey, statesman and friend of statesmen, warning Mrs Thatcher against her naive desire to support the United States, in this case over a partial US view of the Gulf war; here is Dennis Skinner muttering into his hypothetical beer. Yet, as with a picture containing a deliberate mistake, something is subtly different (no, not the substitute of a Pom for a terrier at the Duchess's feet: the Young-Tebbit war is for the specialists). What really catches the eye is Nicholas Ridley being sweetly reasonable and a pleasingly stupified Jack Cunningham being nice to him.

But that's the way with acts of God; like the blitz, they throw quarrelling neighbours into warm-hearted support of one another. Dr Jack and the Hon. Nicholas huddled together like babes in an air raid shelter, differing politely about what Dr Cunningham called 'one or two specifics', but proposing and seconding broad financial support for councils hit by Hurricane Ethelred, as I think out of deference to the Michael Fish-Ian Mackaskill performance, we should be calling it. There was even deeper consensus on the Ridley subvention for planting trees, something which we are told the Environment Secretary won over the heads of tittering colleagues, men temperamentally indisposed to aesthetics.

This solicitude for nature is an aspect of the Minister of which we have little experience. Much of the time he sounds like a man perched on a shooting stick picking off sentimental fallacies or, in the case of the poll tax, aiming his twelve bore at lesser-crested verities. But the Lutyens in his genes, which makes him such a gifted water colourist, has permitted the least likely of Thatcherian Ministers to do something roughly sympathetic.

Clearly, the parliamentary decency cannot take too much of Dr Cunningham rejoicing in 'the rare treat of reiterating the Secretary of State's words'. Normal services were resumed when next day the House turned to South Africa.

Now South Africa, in parliamentary terms, is the oldest, best-loved oratorio in the repertory. Not *Gerontius*, not the *Messiah* can compete. This piece has its Evangelist, usually sung by Mr David Winnick whose sense of virtue casts a little shadow on all who sit around him, a Judas or Judette which the Prime Minister has made all her own, and a divided chorus of stoners and unrepentent sinners deep into Barclays or De Beers.

Everyone has a small part and they all have the lines word perfect: Mr John Carlisle (crypto-Afrikaner) rises to congratulate the Prime Minister, who surely deserves better, and the cry goes up from the Opposition Benches 'Speak for England'. The Prime Minister talks, implausibly, about 'the elimination of Apartheid' but after a distinctly Augustinian fashion, that is, not now! Joan Lestor does her voice-breaking-at-the-awfulness-of-it-all bit which is fine for Miss Lestor and butters no parsnips in Soweto. Ian Lloyd does his non-imitation of the most arrogant imaginable sort of business type who knows the score in South Africa.

Candidly, one reacts against the sentiments of each new participant in the debate. The Labour position is hopelessly self-indulgent and morally narcissistic — 'Look mum, watch me being terribly anti-Apartheid and really enraged about the blacks'. Most of the Tories who take part in this sort of thing, honourably excepting Hugh Dykes who does loathe the South African government, seem pussy-cat pleased with the status quo in the sleek way of Dr Pangloss contemplating the yet worse things not to have happened so far.

Mrs Thatcher partly echoed this tone, though; it being a good afternoon for her, she was sharper than such complacency suggests. She did what she always does best, got off morality and onto economics. By sticking to economic performance she moves out of the ethical shadow-play of ringing declarations against apartheid and puts her opponents in the unhappy position, as they grow more hectoring, of sounding, well, like Margaret Thatcher.

David Steel did his reputation for watching the ball no good by demanding the trade figures *vis a vis* South Africa for 1987! Mrs Thatcher enjoyed telling him that they haven't come out yet (they never do you know, not in the year they're still happening).

Her position may not be attractive, but it *is* lucid and there is no future in simply abusing her for racism, as Bernie Grant did.

Mrs Thatcher is many things, insensitive to poor, under-privileged people being one of them, but racist she isn't and never has been. There is simply no political merit in pressing the charge. The observation of Tony Banks, cryptically apt as ever, is that 'Business as usual' sums her up attitude plus a dash of geo-politics and dislike of the *politics* not the skins of black leaders in South Africa.

Thus the time passed as the world shuddered about us. We are going to plant trees and we held a morality play about Africa. The collapse of the market with its implications for the real economy, parliament, with its customary flexibility and capacity to seize the day, did not discuss. Perhaps it was too big an issue or too immediate. As Sydney Smith had it: 'I am not fond of expecting catastrophes, but there are cracks in the universe.'

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Reining in the markets

It started last week in the US, triggered off by fears of a falling dollar. It hit the exchanges in London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Paris with the raw force of panic. But what has the crash of '87 changed?

In this special series of reports on the consequences of the crash, **I. F. STONE** *argues that the US economy is the basic source of instability in the West;* **JOHN SMITH,** *the Shadow Chancellor, calls for greater international co-ordination and government intervention;* **FRANCES MORRELL** *and* **TERRY WARD** *argue that the internationalisation of capital has made 'nation state socialism' redundant; and* **ANDREW COWLEY** *says that the free fall of the markets has 'dented the myth that free markets are always the best means of allocating what resources are available'.*

End of a Profligate Era

THE UNITED STATES, the world's number-one debtor nation, may be heading for history's biggest bankruptcy. If that occurs, it will drag the world down with it, whether capitalist or communist, developed or underdeveloped. Even a new bull market would not cure the basic disorder of the US economy.

It is not just that something has to be done about the Federal deficit and the trade deficit. The whole country is in hock. One of the delusions of supply-side economics was that massive tax cuts would lead to a sharp rise in the volume of savings. But the savings rate — as a percentage of disposable income *after* taxes — has been cut by more than half during the Reagan years. It was 7.1 per cent in 1980 and 4.3 per cent in 1986. This year it has averaged 3 per cent and is currently closer to 2 per cent. That is a precipitous drop.

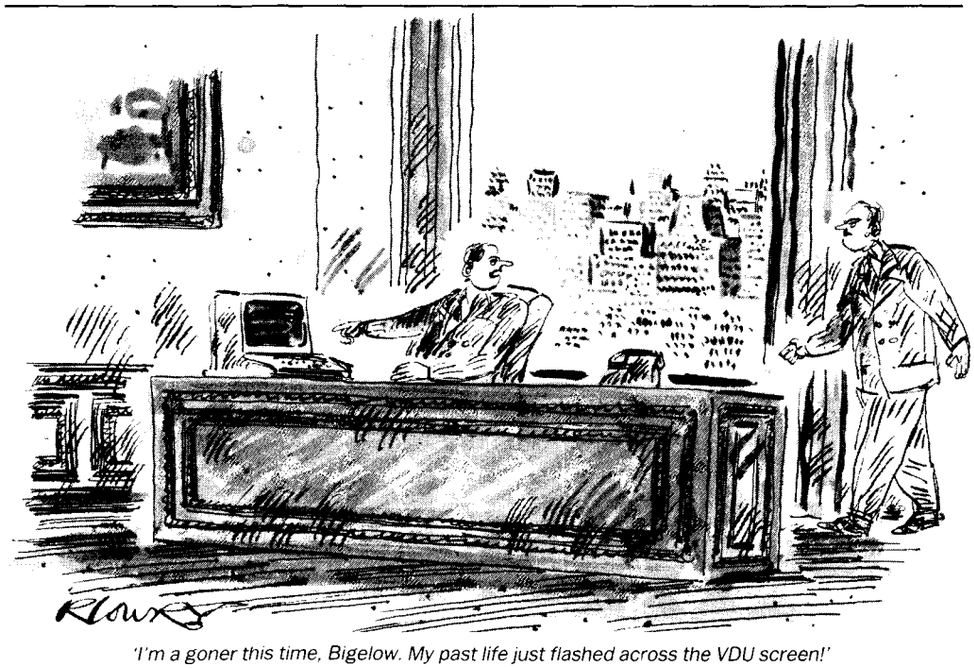
This is reflected in the biggest consumer binge of all time, based increasingly on credit. Since 1980 private debt, including instalment credit, non-instalment debt and home mortgages, has almost doubled. It was a shade above $1.3 trillion in 1980. The latest 1987 estimate is almost $2.5 trillion. Every American seems to have acquired not just one but several credit cards. With all that funny money, who needs counterfeiters anymore?

The public debt in the Reagan era rose even faster than the private did. It more than doubled. The Federal debt went from $742.8 billion in 1980 to $1.87 trillion at the end of the second quarter of 1987. State and local debt rose from $295.3 billion to $533.1 billion. Total government debt is now almost $2.5 trillion, only a shade behind the private. Together they add up to almost $5 trillion. The Reagan Administration, while preaching the old-fashioned virtues, has inspired an era of unprecedented profligacy.

The trade deficit is another of its aspects. That deficit was $31.4 billion in 1980. The latest estimate, on the basis of the first eight months of this year, is $170.3 billion. It is growing although the dollar has lost 40 per cent of its value in the past 22 months, a *de facto* devaluation that was supposed to make US products competitive again. All this helps explain the hysteria on the stock market and why yields on long-term government bonds are in the double digits again.

The bill collector is at the door. But political leadership is reluctant to answer the bell. The early warning was sounded by George Bush in the 1980 Republican nominating campaign before his eyes were clouded by the vice-presidency. He had said we couldn't have a stepped-up arms race, a tax cut *and* a balanced budget. We are suffering the consequences of this 'voodoo economics'. But he is now advocating what he once denounced, saying no, just like Reagan, to any tax increase or defence cut. His only concrete contribution to the economic debate is a proposal to cut capital gains taxes, a supply-side snake oil that would add to the deficit in order to refuel speculation. This is like trying to stem drug addiction by cutting the price of narcotics.

The United States needs a dose of austerity as surely as do Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. But the International Monetary Fund does not dare scold us as it does them. Nor do we hear any clear voice from the Democratic candidates. They remember too well what happened to Mondale when he dared utter the dirty word 'taxes' in 1984. Already Treasury Secretary Baker is suggesting that the stock market had started to crash because Democrats in Congress had proposed a few nickel-and-dime additions to corporate levies and a curb on takeovers. Reagan reverted to his old language as a sportscaster and offered as arguments against new taxes or defence cuts only the word 'nuts!'. Only after a Black Monday and a Wild Tuesday was he prevailed upon to hint, though still Delphically, at a possible compromise on the deficit. The vocabulary itself is enough to scare foreign investors. Any cuts must come out of civilian expenditures. But if you set aside interest on the debt, entitlements (like Social Security and Medicare) and the great untouchable of 'defence' (which is really the cost of maintaining worldwide empire), even shutting down the rest of the government entirely wouldn't erase this year's deficit. The total bill for all departments other than defence as proposed in the Reagan budget for 1988 is almost $118 billion. This year's deficit is now projected to be $185 billion. So you could abolish civil government altogether and still be $67 billion in the red. Reagan has been hoping to stave off the deluge of debt until after he leaves office and then blame Congress and the Democrats — and by implication constitutional government itself — for the gigantic mess Reaganomics has created. The Profligate Era is ending with a



'I'm a goner this time, Bigelow. My past life just flashed across the VDU screen!'

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deliberately created impasse. This could breed a new fascistic mentality.

Let us imagine for a moment what would happen if the two parties in Congress escaped from the blighting shadow of Reagan's veto power and reached agreement on a really radical cut in the deficit. It could begin to restore confidence worldwide. True it would mean some bitter medicine at home, but that may be the one way to avoid a crash recalling 1929. But that improbable scenario may already be too late as stock markets gyrate frantically everywhere.

It is frightening that the economic crisis coincides with escalation in the Persian Gulf, where classic and immemorial fears of appearing weak drag the United States and Iran closer to the brink of another and more unsettling Vietnam. We may be at a new chapter in human history when economic distress and war fears exacerbate every regional quarrel on the planet and darken the prospects for superpower accommodation.

I.F. Stone

I.F. Stone is an occasional writer for the New York Nation.

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The world needs Keynesians

THE CRASH of '87 is no mere panic in the stock market casino. Ultimately, stock market prices are related to future company profitability, which in turn is linked to the domestic and international economy. This linkage was very much in evidence last week as the markets finally responded to the alarming economic imbalances that threaten to throw the world into a major recession. Despite the glib reassurances of President Reagan and Chancellor Lawson, the economic 'fundamentals' are far from sound.

The glaring imbalance between a US economy in deficit and Japan and Germany in surplus has posed a grave threat to economic stability for some time. The risk remains that US attempts to tackle their twin budget and trade deficits will provoke an international recession, unless expansion in both Germany and Japan compensate for the invevitable loss of US demand.

Since 1985, following a meeting of finance ministers at the Plaza Hotel in New York, the major industrialised countries have been attempting to assist US adjustment through managed decline in the previously overvalued dollar. Intervention by the major Central Banks has ensured a decline in the dollar in the hope that the US trade balance will improve. The new enthusiasm for currency target zones, reconfirmed at the Louvre meeting in Paris in February and at the recent IMF annual meeting in Washington, mark a significant rejection of laissez faire theories.

But exchange rate intervention and currency target zones are not sufficient to stabilise the international economy. The major industrial powers must also accept the domestic policy changes required to sustain world economic growth. The US must increase taxes to reduce the budget deficit and reverse its seemingly insatiable appetite for imports. At the same time the Germans and Japanese have to reject monetarist orthodoxies and stimulate economic demand both at home and abroad. Without such expansionary policy co-ordination the industrialised countries will find themselves threatened by slowed growth, increased trade protectionism and higher interest rates; a scenario for world-wide recession.

Just two weeks ago at a meeting in Washington, this analysis was argued to me most forcibly by the new Managing Director of the IMF, Monsieur Michel Camdessus. In refreshing Keynesian language he told me that, without the commitment to expansion, the exchange rate intervention would fail and the dollar would collapse amidst fears of a US economic slump. Precisely these fears acted as the catalyst to the Wall Street crash.

When the US Treasury Secretary James Baker (the architect of the Plaza agreement) threatened to break the currency zone accord in order to demonstrate his anger at West German monetarist rigour, brokers caught a glimpse of the recessionary abyss and panicked.

Previously suppressed qualms about the US deficits and the instability of the international economy resurfaced, reawakened by the possibility of a free-falling dollar driving the world into recession. Stock markets around the world dragged each other down as gloom spread from time zone to time zone, speeded by automatic computer selling programmes and the increased internationalisation of equity and capital trading.

Such a rapid market collapse would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. The one-day falls recorded on all the world's major exchanges were far worse in percentage terms than anything experienced on Wall Street in 1929. This is largely attributable to the advance of internationalisation and new technology which have built an alarming element of volatility into contemporary world markets. This potential volatility, so startlingly revealed last week, is extremely dangerous. Stock market collapses have real and highly adverse deflationary effects. Financial institutions unable to cover positions collapse, consumption falls as investors ponder their reduced wealth. Companies find it more difficult to raise finance as a result of their much reduced valuations. Economic uncertainty adds an additional downward twist to consumption and investment patterns.

Governments are, therefore, currently faced with a serious underlying economic situation compounded by the threat of market volatility. In this situation, laissez faire economic policies are positively harmful. The markets themselves now crave the leadership of industrialised country governments and central banks.

This realisation is at last beginning to dawn on ardent free marketeers within the British and US Treasuries. Even Nigel Lawson, whose earlier faith in the overriding virtue of the free market extended to allowing the pound to career between $2.40 and $1.05, is now tentatively advocating greater exchange-rate management and even tax increases in the US.

The inescapable fact for the right-wing governments which govern the western world is that, having been tested to destruction, market-orientated solutions are increasingly discredited. But the finance ministers of the so-called Group of 7 are bound to be at best reluctant champions of co-ordinated expansion. Their ideological prejudices inhibit firm action to promote international economic growth. *The world needs committed Keynesians but is run by disillusioned monetarists; a political imbalance as severe as the economic instability that is so evident today.*

The next step must be for the G7 countries to meet at a new Economic Summit at which they reject the appalling complacency and indecision so evident at the pre-election meeting in Venice. On the agenda must be the working-out of a co-ordinated strategy for reducing the US deficit, in line with a planned expansion of the other economies, and a new and imaginative approach to the debt problems of the developing world. It is now clear for all to see that tackling unemployment at home and promoting development in the third world are essential to international economic stability and recovery.

John Smith

John Smith is Shadow Chancellor.

Disaster can be averted . . .

The left is no longer against Europe. On the contrary — it may become quite fiercely pro-Common Market: a trend which tumbling stock prices will help confirm.

Next weekend, on 7/8 November, a major conference — 'Alternative to Trade Wars' — will bring together a wide range of European socialists to discuss future strategies of the European left. In the keynote paper for that conference, Frances Morrell, with Terry Ward of Cambridge University's Department of Applied Economics, makes the case for the left to develop 'a politically unified response to the market-led restructuring of Europe'. Some extracts:

'In the US today, Wall Street waits for the publication of the American trade figures each month with the same passion once reserved for the money supply. Anxiety over the US trade deficit amongst investors has been the direct cause of the precipitous fall in share prices over the past week.

'That collapse is at one level highly rational. Even the United States cannot continue indefinitely to import more than it exports. Measures to correct the trade imbalance are highly likely and will probably take the form of protection. This could trigger a global trade war . . .

'If the citadel of the free market faith goes unilaterally protectionist, those who supported the Atlanticist strategy will have to think again: it will be impossible to defend a non-interventionist economic strategy which rests on the view that we should not protect our own industry against external competition, or by public investment enable it to expand.

'Disaster can be averted; but it will need

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Western Europe in general and the British government in particular to adopt a fundamentally different and more realistic view of what is going on in the world of multinational trade and finance.

'The reality is that international financial and economic relationships are out of control. The international financial markets resemble nothing so much as a giant casino in which the bets cast are in no way influenced by the social and economic interests of the countries whose currencies are being traded. Essentially, government will have to assume responsibility for international trade and finance again and negotiate trade and financial agreements which permit domestic growth without a balance of payments crisis.

'Britain needs to make common cause with its Western European partners to bargain with the United States and Japan for a reflationary strategy whose benefits are redistributed, so that weaker economics benefit as much as the US. A further strategy for world economist development needs to be agreed with Africa, Latin America and Asia . . .

'International constraints on national policy action are now so severe that the scope for unilaterally pursuing the social and economic goals on which there is so much agreement is extremely limited.

'What are those constraints? They stem from three major sources. First, as restrictions on the free movement of goods and services between countries have been lifted and as international trade has grown in importance, the need for national producers to compete on world markets has become imperative. No government, whatever its political complexion, can afford to ignore the consequence of its policies on the competitive strength of its economy or to neglect the effects of the trade performance of domestic industries and of developments in export markets on its capacity to secure national objectives.

'Secondly, as multinational companies have extended their empires and begun to organise production on an international scale . . . the means open to governments to influence economic development have diminished and become less effective. Companies like Ford, for example, plan Europe-wide. Separate national governments have little impact.

'Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, liberalisation of capital flows and the enormous expansion of international financial transactions have made currency markets volatile and exchange rates prone to wild fluctuations. The risk of speculation against a currency building up and becoming uncontrollable has forced governments to give increasing priority to financial stability at the expense of economic growth and social objectives. This has manifested itself in the conduct of budgetary and monetary policy, with its emphasis on reducing borrowing and curbing money supply growth, and in the prominence given to controlling inflation. The last two Labour governments were forced to abandon their programmes because of currency speculation; yet Labour has never discussed its answer to this problem. These trends towards economic integration have proceeded further and faster in Europe than anywhere else. Britain, like other European countries, has become increasingly linked into the European market. Growth of the British economy over the long term is largely determined by the rate at which other countries in Europe are expanding. Experience of the past 15 years indicates that there is little realistic prospect of growing much faster than this whatever policies the Government of the day decides to adopt.'

Frances Morrell & Terry Ward

The worsening of the worst

THE CITY of London did not have much to celebrate on the first anniversary of Big Bang. A week before, one of the greatest surges in share prices ever seen ended as greed turned to fear to panic on the world's bourses. John Phelan, the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, described Monday's 508-point fall on Wall Street (twice the single greatest fall of 1929 in percentage terms) as 'financial meltdown'. By last Friday, nearly £700 billion had been wiped off the value of stocks quoted on the major stockmarkets. Dealers hoping that the good old days would be back this week were disappointed. Instead they learnt that

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By working hand in hand with the local GP and district nurse, a Macmillan nurse's skill allows patients to remain at home rather than in an impersonal hospital ward.

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All in all, she can help life to go on as normally and with as much dignity as this cruel disease will allow.

But it's your generosity that buys this care. That helps to make a life for those who live with cancer.

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in a bear market the 'worst continues to worsen.'*

The collapse in share prices has done far more than shred the paper wealth of a number of very rich people and reduce the holdings of institutions. It has also dented the myth, become so powerful this decade, that free markets are always the best means of allocating what resources are available. Falls of the size that have been seen in the past week are not the hallmark of an efficient market.

Jean-Claude Paye, the secretary-general of the OECD, put it this way: 'The magnitude of the fall on the world's stockmarkets is unjustified. The condition of companies is generally good. Stock values, even if their recent growth has been rapid, were not excessive. Prospects for economic growth, without being brilliant, were rather encouraging . . . If the wave which broke on Monday took on such proportions, it was largely a bandwagon reflex — reinforced by computerisation — to which speculative markets have always been prone.'

Computerisation has come in for a lot of stick over the past week. It is a red-herring. In 1929, financiers managed to create a convincing crash without a computer in sight. The herd mentality of markets does not need technology, which can only make stupidity more sophisticated.

The 'correction'

At the core of stockmarkets is what Xavier Dupont, chairman of the Paris bourse, describes as 'a confidence trick that ensures the market is excessive by nature'. The trick persuades investors that a piece of paper issued by a company is worth a particular multiple of a future projection of the company's earnings, a valuation method which is about as precise as sticking a finger up in the air. The past five years *have* seen earnings climbing, but share prices have gone up even faster. The result was stockmarkets with a yield far below interest rates. A 'correction' (as crashes are invariably called these days) was inevitable.

The last time the London stockmarket crashed in 1973-74, it had the first oil shock and a three-day week to worry about. This time confidence was so thin that it did not need any bad news that affected it directly. It only took nervousness on Wall Street to send share prices tumbling. And Wall Street caught a cold because Bob Prechter, one of its most influential gurus, changed his mind and told his clients to sell their shares; because American forces attacked and destroyed a couple of oil platforms in the Gulf; and because Treasury Secretary James Baker let it be known that he was not pleased with the Germans and hinted the dollar may have to fall further.

This last sign of fraying international co-operation was what really made the financial markets nosedive. Without real co-operation, there is no chance that the major imbalances in the world economy will be redressed. The markets have made it obvious that they do not believe in the Louvre Accord, agreed by the finance ministers of the major Western countries in February. The accord tried to ensure a period of exchange rate stability. But the markets did not see how the currency of the world's biggest debtor could continue to be worth the same as the currencies of the world's two strongest economies for any length of time. While massive central bank intervention has managed to shore up this illusion, the resulting uncertainty has fed through into interest rates and so into the equity markets.

The markets now seem unlikely to be reassured by anything less than a serious attempt by the Reagan administration to tackle the budget and trade deficits it has allowed to accumulate at such a frightening rate; the IMF has calculated that, on current trends, the US will owe $1.6 trillion by 1995. It would cost $100 billion a year just to service this level of debt.

But to tackle problems of this scale, America will need help from Japan and West Germany. Until Messrs Baker, Miyazawa and Stoltenberg, the respective finance ministers, have decided how they will cope with the imbalances between their economies, the world's financial system will continue to be as volatile as it is now. And paper losses in America have reduced projections for American growth next year to zero.

Controlling the City

For Britain this news is bad enough to warrant a more responsible reaction from the government than merely dismissing market movements as 'grotesque over-reaction', as Nigel Lawson has tried to do. While Britain can only hope to have limited influence over the talks between the three keymen, the future of the City of London is mortgaged to their decisions.

Like it or not, the City earns Britain as much as the North Sea does each year. And, if it is carefully managed, there is no reason why its resources should dry up. The City's importance to London's economy is even more important than these figures suggest. Hundreds of companies and thousands of people depend on it for their living. The City's dealing rooms spend ever greater amounts on computer and telephone equipment; the vast amount of reports it produces keep printers busy; its over-paid dealers are forced to pay through the nose for services they are too busy to do for themselves.

This means the government must take a long hard look at the rules it has laid down to ensure that the markets do not go haywire. While it is too early to draw any firm conclusions, the events of the past ten days point to a number of serious failings in the way today's financial markets are developing.

For example, there is a hot debate going on over whether some of the more arcane financial techniques that have sprung up in the past few years, especially futures and options, have made the crash better or worse. Their defenders say that they gave investors their only chance of cutting their losses when the cash markets dried up. Their attackers reckon the fact that the price of futures contracts outstripped the market falls by such an extent only served to increase the panic. Problems in the Hong Kong futures market became so bad that the government had to shut the whole exchange. The final bill from speculators who are unlikely to pay for getting it wrong in Hong Kong will be over HK$1 billion.

Then there is the fashion for globalisation. This has seen companies listing their shares on all the world's major exchanges and making great efforts to sell their shares as well as their products to foreigners. For companies with a genuine global network, this may well make a lot of sense. The problem is that the linkages this forms between markets means they all go down in lockstep when things go wrong.

In London, the post-Big Bang system has meant cheaper dealing prices for the big institutions, but more expensive ones for individuals who mostly found it impossible to get through to their brokers last week if they wanted to sell. The changes introduced in London and elsewhere have favoured the big investment firms. And while better capitalised firms make markets more liquid, they also mean the aftermath of a bankruptcy will be much harder to contain.

These are only some of the problems that regulators should be worrying about in the wake of recent events. The answers are not obvious. But it is clear that the race to rip down the old market practices has not left the most perfect edifice in their place. If the crash emboldens the government to take a more responsible attitude to the financial markets it is supposed to control, then it may have been no bad thing.

Andrew Cowley

Andrew Cowley is a staff writer on the Economist

* *The Great Crash*, J.K. Galbraith.

FATHER, AS MY SPECIAL ADVISER I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU JESUS HAD RETURNED!
THAT HE WAS SITTING WHERE YOU ARE NOW AND HE'S GONE OFF TO AMERICA TO VISIT THE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A!!
I'D SAY YOU WERE NUTS...
I WAS AFRAID OF THAT..
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The freezing grip of a despot in decline

MISHA GLENNY *reports on the closing period of a 'despotism based on fear, systematic racism and hunger'*

THROUGHOUT THE 1980s, Romania has witnessed and suffered the rapid descent into madness of a leader whose personal power is unrivalled in Europe. President Ceausescu has fostered a personality cult so powerful that it may even have frightened Stalin.

For the outsider, the surface manifestations of the cult are a weird source of fascination. The bookshops, with Marx and Engels confined to dusty corners, have been turned into shrines overflowing with his delphic offerings. One of the two hours of television every night is frequently devoted to a deeper understanding of the great man. His wife Elena, affectionately dubbed the Imelda of the Balkans, stands by his side directing the country's 'scientific-technological' revolution.

At the last count 16 members of his immediate family, including the flamboyant playboy son, Nicu, held leading positions in the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) or the government. Mind-boggling too are the poems, the articles, the falsification of history with which his cronies struggle to outdo one another, living as they do under the permanent threat of falling into disfavour or worse.

The fascination of power

The damage done by personality cults corresponds to the degree of cultivation. President Husak in Czechoslovakia likes to have his portrait hung in every office, institution and factory. But he prefers to let other people run the country's economy. While it is true that they often do this very badly, it does ensure a degree of pluralism and dynamism, which at least affords the population a balanced and varied diet the whole year around.

The tragedy of Ceausescu's personality cult lies in its cancerous growth into every aspect of Romania's social, political and economic life. All major decisions are made by a president fascinated by his limitless power.

The most far-reaching was taken in the early eighties when the country embarked upon a new policy of economic autarky. Ceausescu correctly identified the $11 billion external debt as a major barrier to economic progress. His response, however, was fiscal lunacy. The debt, he maintained, must be eradicated as fast as possible and no new credits taken on board. By the end of 1986 the debt had been reduced by half to $5.6 billion. But, while Romania's creditworthiness is at an all time high, its people's larders are bare.

In order to pay off the debt at breakneck speed Romania has been exporting anything of value it produces. Its most marketable commodity is food. But the system which functions in many other East European countries, whereby peasants provide basic foods for themselves and relatives in the town, no longer applies in Romania. Long prison sentences are meted out to anyone who fails to give all food they produce to the state distribution centre.

Tinned sardines are plentiful in Bucharest. Carrots, apples and potatoes are available in one fresh food market at least. Bread gets snapped up first thing in the morning. But beyond that food is hard to come by. The only place where one will definitely find meat is in the capital's Intercontinental Hotel.

Somehow Romanians still seem to scrape together enough food to survive. Their real struggle begins in November when the bitter Balkan cold sets in. Last January draconian measures were once again introduced to curb people's reckless attempts to keep themselves from freezing. Offices and homes were only permitted to be heated at temperatures of 14 degrees centigrade. Gas and electricity came on for only two hours a day in many districts. This is despite the fact that the real waster, Romanian industry, continues to consume a massive 87 per cent of the grid's energy.

The right to live

'Human rights in Romania' explained my only casual acquaintance, who felt able to talk on a completely empty bus, 'is not about the right to read or write what one wants. It is about the right to stay alive.' Nobody knows the number of deaths from hypothermia during winter in Romania, but estimates from within the country suggest it runs into thousands. Energy is Ceausescu's major headache and to cure it the last thing he needs to worry about is people.

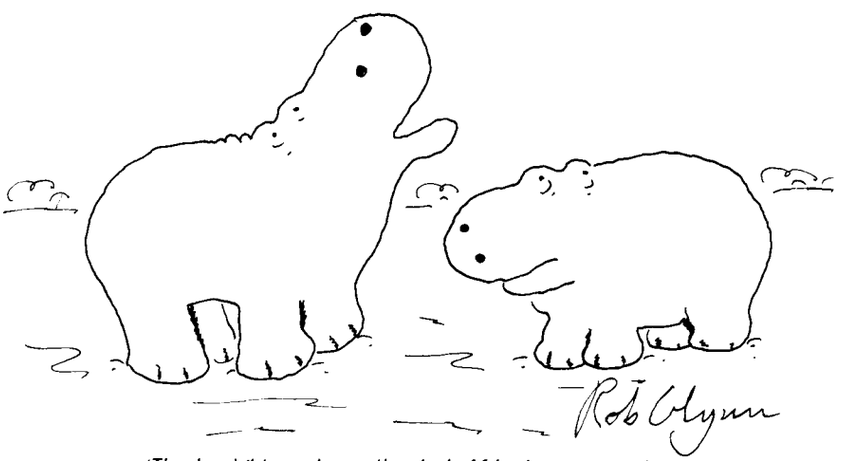
While with one hand the RCP taketh life away by turning off the gas, with the other it giveth in the form of Ceausescu's demography programme. As part of the Conducator's racist Romanization policy, women of child-bearing age are keenly encouraged to produce offspring. Several years ago, abortions were made illegal. Both doctors and women involved in back street operations risk up to six years imprisonment. If the woman's life is at stake, then an abortion may be performed, but only if a party member is there to supervise it.

Last year the demography programme moved up a gear with the formation of 'birth squads', a perverse antidote to the terror of Central and South America. Women are subjected to monthly pregnancy tests at their place of work. Those who consistently fail to conceive are now also visited by the 'birth squads', policemen who ask detailed questions about their sex life and the health of their wombs. Couples who have no children by the age of 26 are liable for a special tax.

The chief victims of 'Romanization' are the country's ethnic minorities. The fate of the two million Transylvanian Hungarians is probably the best publicised, but perhaps even more defenceless are the Romanian Saxons, the Slovaks and Serbs. Romanization involves the progressive erosion of language and education rights on the one hand and the splitting up of minorities and settling of Romanians on the other.

Earlier this year the warm fraternal relations between Hungary and Romania took a sharp turn for the worse. Ceausescu himself denounced the Hungarian minister of culture, Bela Kopeczi, for promoting 'nationalist, racist and fascist theses' in his three-volume history of Transylvania. Hungary has responded by supporting a Canadian proposal at the Helsinki follow-up conference in Vienna, defending the rights of minorities in Europe and aimed unambiguously at Romania.

Two weeks ago the RCP announced the latest victims of the energy crisis. Just as everyone is bracing themselves for the coming winter, the minister for electrical energy, Iaon Avram, got the



'They're right, you know, the sky in Africa is enormous.'

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boot and a stinging reprimand for incompetence. This is one of the hottest ministerial seats, having been sat upon by four twitching bottoms in the last eighteen months. But it is with Ceausescu, the man doing the sacking, that real responsibility for the crisis lies.

Although Avram was incompetent and unable to fulfill his brief of bringing down consumption and increasing production, he also fell foul of Ceausescu's unique political strategy of 'rotation'. In order to prevent any of his colleagues from building their own power base within government or party, he subjects them to a permanent game of ministerial musical chairs. In achieving his aim, he also ensures that no leading minister or party functionary develops the needed competence in any one field.

But the latest round of 'rotation' appears to have been more than just the usual 'keep them on their toes' exercise. Expulsions from the Central Committee of hitherto reliable acolytes, accompanied by a shake-up in the *Securitate* (the internal security forces), secret police, and the interior ministry suggest that there was a sharp disagreement between one or more groups and Ceausescu. Although they rarely come up for air, small schools of technocrats, reformers and pro-Soviet Romanian communists quietly resist Ceausescu's current of power.

Socialist trout

Not that they would admit to this. They are merely preparing for the Conducator's death. This will create a mighty power vacuum. Those who aim to fill it will have to devise some way of deconstructing the Ceausescu cult, a far more difficult business than might be thought. Outsiders often erroneously assume that Elena or Nicu will continue the dynasty once Nicolae has gone. But the president was only able to consolidate his position in the party after building up a network over several decades. Ceausescu's relations have got where they are purely by dint of the man himself. They command little or no support in the party, which in a bizarre way remains the sum of its parts.

Among other architectural curiosities, Ceausescu will leave behind a completely reconstructed city centre in his capital. In Uranus, the old town, there stood some of the finest old buildings in Bucharest until three years ago. Now a gothic monstrosity heavily informed by Metropolis and Stalin grows out from the levelled ground.

When it is finished the new Central Committee Centre will be surrounded by political and cultural complexes. Down the middle of all this will be the newly-diverted Dimbovita river. The President envisages a fleet of paddle boats for his obedient citizens, while a colony of socialist trout will be introduced to patrol the waters below.

The keenest admirer of Romania in the western world is the United States. The official reason given for the Reagan administration's unflagging support for most favoured nation trading status is that if Romania was denied this, human rights would get even worse. But as Reagan supporters admit, the real reason is provided by military strategists who believe that in the event of an East-West crisis, Romania may be persuaded to remain neutral or even switch sides. Has Reagan picked the wrong freedom fighters *this* time?

MEDIA

Escaping from the grip of capital

Peter Capella

INDEPENDENCE is a fashionable word among journalists. Most editors can write about independence in dreamy admiration — provided the proprietor does not give them a rap on the knuckles while they are typing the story.

In France, independence is not just a fashion or an ephemeral guarantee of journalistic freedom, but a device that sells newspapers and turns them into a viable commercial proposition. Both *Le Monde* and the weekly current affairs magazine *L'Evénement du jeudi* have a reputation for quality, and their staff are adamant that the key to their success is the diversity of ownership. That diversity is either partly or wholly guaranteed by one concept — *reader ownership*.

L'Evénement is the most extreme example of the concept, and the most successful too. *All* of its financial backing comes from 19,000 people who hold 45,000 shares between them. For the managing editor, Jean François Kahn, this diverse collection of small shareholdings is the most effective way to make editorial independence durable. 'All of the people who set up the magazine had experienced problems linked to a conflict between a newspaper and its owner. We escaped from the grip of capital by distributing the ownership widely. You replace one proprietor with several thousand shareholders who are potential readers.'

The simplicity of the scheme belies its commercial success. *L'Evénement* was only launched in September 1984, yet it is likely to equal the £200,000 profit it made last year, despite an increase in the size of the magazine, and expenditure on an advertising campaign that led management to predict a loss of £300,000. Sales have been pushed above those of its three long-standing competitors, thanks to its wide-ranging and in-depth reporting and investigative features — a type of journalism that often offends a single owner. One owner will always have friends who will be protected from investigation.

On a smaller scale, reader ownership has helped newspapers pull out of a financial crisis. In 1984, *Le Monde* was faced with heavy losses, and set about restructuring its financial base to avoid being taken over by one of the press barons, who would have been only too happy to get hold of the flagship of French newspapers. An additional £1.5 million was raised by giving an 11 per cent stake to a holding company owned by its readers; management sold the shares through a subscription form printed in the newspaper. Circulation picked up by 10 per cent to 363,663 in 1986.

THIS MONTH, another national daily, *Le Matin*, will follow in the steps of its more illustrious rival. It is a gratifying example for journalists; *Le Matin*'s circulation had collapsed by 58 per cent in two years to a mere 60,000, and after it went into receivership in May with losses of 62 million francs, the press barons who looked at the company shook their head and said *non*. Instead, a group of 12 journalists salvaged the newspaper, with a package based on diversity. The largest single shareholding, 20 per cent, will go to some of its readers.

One of the architects of the revival — along with Kahn of *L'Evénement* — is the manager of *Le Monde*, Bernard Wouts. He says that reader ownership does not work as well with a newspaper that is committed to an ideology. 'In that case, the demands of a reader are partisan, and contradict the newspaper's role to inform, which must appeal to those beyond its core to increase circulation and ensure financial survival.' Wouts believes that an independent newspaper can survive in the free market more easily. Its financial needs do not push it in the direction of concentration. 'With diverse ownership, you rely little on the free market for capital, and the mobilisation of readers is an important factor.'

COULD IT WORK here? Andreas Whittam Smith, the editor of the *Independent*, is the only person in Britain who has successfully shopped around for money to create an independent newspaper. He would not swap the current structure of the *Independent* for reader ownership. The 33 financial institutions that share the capital of the newspaper can provide sufficient backing in case of a takeover battle or if he needed to raise more money, 'and we don't expect to . . . They are of an enormous size. Whatever I asked for, say £4 million, it's absolutely minute to them.'

Those strengths compare with the way small shareholders are vulnerable to hostile predators if the shares are quoted on the stock exchange, as Rupert Murdoch has demonstrated; he built up his 15 per cent stake in Pearson by buying the smaller shares in the group. Yet Whittam Smith feels that this is the best way of setting up small shareholdings open to readers. 'They feel they own something if they can see a price for it.'

The French examples sidestep this problem, mainly by not being quoted, and by setting up holding companies that are owned by the readers. Separate company statutes limit the number of holding company shares any one individual can own, and act as a double safety valve alongside the main statutes of the newspaper, which prevent anyone from buying more than one third.

Whittam Smith, does think however that reader ownership can be an attractive idea. 'I proposed it to the *Daily Telegraph* when it was experiencing great difficulty with finance . . . If five per cent had subscribed, which is highly likely of a *Daily Telegraph* readership, they would have found all the finance they needed.'

Politically the concept is marketable too. Labour can define it in terms of 'social ownership', and the Conservatives would quite happily believe that it fits in with the tide of 'popular capitalism'. Above all reader ownership does not rely on legislation, new or old, to preserve or create independent newspapers. It is a self-help scheme that benefits journalists and readers alike, and no one else.

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Playing off the superpowers

DILIP HIRO *reports on the high risks incurred by the US in escalating its opposition to Iran*

THE GULF CRISIS is entangled with the crisis on the financial markets. In normal times, an American attack on disused Iranian oil platforms in the international waters of the Gulf would have been viewed as one more irritating turn up a long spiral in a protracted war of nerves between Washington and Tehran. But, in the jittery atmosphere of the 'Blackest Monday' on 19 October, the news was interpreted as heralding a worldwide conflagration of the sort feared a quarter of a century ago in Cuba.

The situation was all the more ironic since the Reagan administration repeatedly described its action as 'a restrained, proportionate and measured' response to the earlier attack on a US-reflagged tanker in Kuwaiti territorial waters by a Silkworm missile fired by Iran.

It was not newly found concern in the White House for Iranian life and property which led it to proclaim its reasonableness. It was the fear of US Congress pressuring President Reagan to invoke the War Powers Act of 1973. The Act provides for an automatic pullout of American forces from the area where hostilities are imminent unless Congress votes permission to them to stay. That is why, after every military action against Iran, US officials stress that no imminent danger of combat or hostilities is present in the Gulf and that 'the matter is now closed'.

As it was, on 21 October, US Senate passed a compromise resolution which requires the White House to report to Congress within 60 days on the US operation in the Gulf, and the Capitol Hill to vote within 30 days whether the operation should continue or not.

American presidents, whether Republican or Democrat, view the War Powers Act as gross interference with their power to execute foreign policy, and resent it. Reagan is no exception. 'What confidence would the world have in you if the President needed Congressional approval for action?' he asked.

The price of confrontation

In the present case the pro-American Gulf monarchs would be deeply disappointed if Reagan were to be shackled by Congress. As autocratic rulers, they have immense difficulty understanding, and coming to terms with, the fractured power structure in Washington. They have been left bewildered by the discovery that for almost two years the White House, the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency pursued one set of policies on Iran while the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Justice and Customs Departments followed something quite contrary.

Part of the reason for the US naval build-up in the region, which has seen 41 American warships and supply vessels gathered in and around the Gulf, is to repair the damage done to the US-Gulf relations in the wake of the Irangate scandal.

But the central question American policy-makers must address is: How far are we willing to take the exercise of restoring confidence among Gulf rulers in America's reliability as an ally? To put it differently: Is the US prepared to clasp a Gulf state like Kuwait so firmly as to end up as an open ally of the Gulf War? If so, is the Reagan administration confident of carrying public opinion with it; and has it estimated the full price of confronting Iran military and diplomatically?

A salient feature of US public life is the widespread hostility among American people towards the Iranian regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. Washington's attack on the Iranian oil platforms won the approval of 76 per cent of those polled. The US Senate passed a unanimous resolution calling for a ban on Iranian imports. Given this, the Reagan administration would have an easy job selling the idea of the US joining the fight against Iran.

> *'As Washington tilts towards Iraq, Tehran has no choice but to strengthen its ties with Moscow'*

However, Washington is likely to find itself on a sticky wicket were it to escalate its conflict with Tehran. In sheer military terms the US is a giant to Iran's pygmy. But like all giants, America has several soft spots. Tehran knows what these are, and how to exploit them.

Perseverance doesn't work

Iranian leaders have been pleased to see US Congress take the first step towards overseeing Reagan's actions in the Gulf. The last time the War Powers Act was invoked was when Reagan decided to despatch US marines to guard Beirut airport in September 1983. With this, the day-to-day management of American forces became a matter of public scrutiny and comment in the US. It was against this background that the pro-Iranian Islamic Jihad of Lebanon truck-bombed the marine quarters, and forced Washington to cut and run.

Tehran is aware of the military might of the US. It is also equally aware of the fact that individual Americans, civilian or military, are petrified of dying, and that officials place inordinately high value on American lives. The contrast is all the more when the excessive American fear of death is juxtaposed with the 'martyrdom seeking' fanaticism of many of the followers, Iranian and non-Iranian, of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Iran's leadership reckons, therefore, that by causing the death of several Americans it can abruptly change the popular mood in the United States. Public opinion in the US is notoriously volatile; and perseverance and tenacity are not the virtues commonly associated with Americans.

Then there is the question of timing. Next January, as Congress prepares to vote on the President's operation in the Gulf, the country will witness the start of the presidential election campaign. The presence of US forces in the Gulf will be a prime subject for controversy and debate. No doubt Democratic candidates will use it to embarrass the Republican president and his party. The net effect of all this will be to limit the area of manoeuvring by Reagan.

Unlike the Gulf monarchs, Iranian leaders are familiar with the nuances of American electioneering. After all, they played a crucial role in the outcome of the 1980 presidential election when the incumbent President Jimmy Carter was defeated. If recent reports of a deal by Reagan's campaign managers with the Iranian leadership are to be believed, Tehran agreed not to release American hostages before the presidential poll and thus help Reagan win.

Burying new things

Beyond the intricacies of the domestic politics of the US, there is the question of the international balance of forces: the position of Iran *vis à vis* the two superpowers.

As Washington tilts more towards Iraq and its Gulf allies, Tehran has no choice but to strengthen its ties with Moscow. This month air links between the two were resumed after a break of nine years. Iran and the Soviet Union have agreed on joint exploration of the Caspian Sea for oil.

More importantly, the plans to prepare the existing Iran-Soviet gas pipeline for the pumping of Iranian oil to the Soviet Union for shipment abroad from Black Sea ports are going ahead. This is a clear signal to the Reagan administration that were the US to destroy Iran's Kharg oil terminal, and bring about the blocking of the Hormuz Straits (as an Iranian retaliation), the Soviets would step in to enable Iran to continue selling its oil abroad and keep its economy running.

Furthermore, as a result of a recent meeting in Damascus between the Iranian Premier, Mir Hussein Mousavi, and the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Yuri Voronstov, Moscow has agreed 'in principle' to supply advanced weapons to Tehran. These include long-range Scud-B ground-to-ground missiles. In the past Iran has used these missiles to hit Baghdad in order to force Iraq to cease its indiscriminate air raids on civilian targets in Iran. They are thus of strategic value to Tehran.

These developments have occurred against the background of Moscow's growing unease at the US naval build-up in the Gulf and its military actions against Iran. During his meeting with US secretary of state, George Shultz, in Moscow last week, Mikhail Gorbachev warned: 'If the US continues its present conduct in the Gulf it could bury many things in the international process including many things in US-Soviet relations.'

In short, the price that the Reagan administration would have to pay for the satisfaction of giving Iran a bloody nose is quite steep. And this is besides the damage that any new US military adventure in the Gulf would do to the effectiveness of the package that American and other Western officials are preparing, to bolster the shell-shocked securities and currencies markets of the capitalist world. □

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CHESTERFIELD CONFERENCE

'There's a lot of anger here'

SARAH BENTON *reports on the ecumenicalism of the left: and finds that the line between the true and false socialists is now thicker than ever.*

THE NIGHT BEFORE the Socialist Conference met in Chesterfield, *Marxism Today* had a dinner party in a Hampstead pub to celebrate its 30 years of publishing. It was a cheerful and self-mocking gathering; a Lenin look-alike popped out of a cardboard cake to deliver a speech in para-Russian on the problems of bran production in the Soviet Union; witty and urbane speeches were made; the port was passed. The diners celebrated a job well done, in this case the intellectual recovery of one marxist tradition which, in 1957, Stalinism and English hostility to ideas had just about killed off. It was not a room in which a struggling activist would have felt comfortable.

Hardly a person from that gathering was in Chesterfield the next day. Few in Chesterfield would have welcomed them. As Peter Gowan from Haringey Labour Party said on Sunday morning, 'We have drawn a line across the labour movement.' At best, those on each side of the line now bifurcating the left regard the other side with exasperation; at worst with contempt and open hostility.

It seems the worst of times to entrench a division. 'Nothing else in our political lifetime will have as much impact as the stock exchange crash. It's devastating,' said Ken Livingstone, in a voice that was as apocalyptic as a man who speaks softly to salamanders can produce. Economic devastation plus a strong right plus a deeply divided left does not usually spell victory for socialism. Yet the division was the premiss of the Socialist Conference. They were gathered there that day to challenge by denunciation the political sway of New Realism on the left. In the unrelenting words of Arthur Scargill, 'New Realism is another name for class collaboration.' For mild-mannered university lecturer Anthony Arblaster: 'We're not here to adjust the left to Thatcherism. The Labour leadership is busy adjusting to Thatcherism. Our job is to counteract that.' They, like many speakers, pointed to the *New Statesman* and *Marxism Today* as marking the boundary between 'right and left'. It was a conference where 'right' more often meant the rest of the Labour Party than any wing of the Conservative Party.

If that was all there was to the conference, the claims by Tony Benn and Ralph Miliband that this was a truly historic occasion would have seemed peculiarly self-deluded. But 1500 people don't pack the trains to Chesterfield just to hear that Eric Heffer thinks everyone should join the Labour Party in order to fight the leadership, and that Arthur Scargill thinks socialists should not be seduced by the siren call of New Realism. The conference undoubtedly touched a chord in the heart of Labour Party activists who are estimated to have made up at least half of those present. That chord is both a desire for 'new ideas', as rare creatures in that gathering as supporters of *Marxism Today*, and, overwhelmingly, for action.

The short-term test of the Socialist Conference is not going to be whether it produces a new analysis of Thatcherism or strategies for socialism, but whether or not it can co-ordinate and inspire a resistance to cuts in public spending, to workplace closures, to, for instance, David Alton's bill to restrict abortion rights. As Tony Benn said at the final plenary: 'Every struggle is the same struggle.' He got a standing ovation.

Stepford socialism

'There's a lot of anger here' said several proudly, as though anger were the birth cry of a new true socialist. They meant that the hostility to Kinnock is not confined to a few Trotskyists and grudging intellectuals, but is an 'authentic' common wish for a socialist militancy of action. That wish is undoubtedly there. After eight years of intolerably high unemployment, deterioration in the environment, a bitter sense of neglect, of the seeping away of political rights, how could it not be? Made-for-the-media remarks from 'sources close to Kinnock', dismissing those who attended

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as 'semi-detached' members of the Labour Party, are also self-deluding. There are undoubtedly many Labour Party members who fear that their socialism will be snatched by the beastly Bryan Gould and sent, like a Stepford wife, to be refitted as a creature to please the share-owning classes. There are many who are more in tune with the jaunty mockery of the Royal Family by the North Staffs Miners' Wives' Group than with the Labour leadership's deference towards the trappings of constitutional monarchy.

This presence of ordinary Labour Party activists made the Socialist Conference different from previous attemps to launch historic initiatives for a new sort of socialism. The first was the 'Beyond the Fragments' conference in Leeds in 1979, a response to the call by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynn Segal and Hilary Wainwright for a non-sectarian, non-Leninist socialism. Over a thousand turned up, everyone agreed it was historic; and it fizzled away for a lack of a common political purpose round which an organisation could be built. The next was the Socialist Society, launched with great fanfare in London in 1981. Over a thousand turned up and in drawing together Eric Heffer (who declared that everyone should join the Labour Party to fight for a left leadership), with more diverse intellectuals, it was *clearly* an historic occasion. It dwindled into a grouping of under 200 members.

But it survived, without its wing of 'new realist' supporters, to organise the Chesterfield Socialist Conference. Those who had been involved in these earlier initiatives (some even dated back to the historic launch, attended by thousands, of the Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation in 1967 which soon . . . etc) were clearly worried that this too will promise a great deal more than it can deliver. While Ralph Miliband welcomed the conference on Saturday morning as the most significant event of its sort since over a thousand met in Leeds in 1917 to welcome the Russian Revolution, by the next day he was warning that the political life of the Socialist Society had been 'downhill all the way'. He offered the assembly his own long-cherished wish — the foundation of a new, independent socialist party; and receiving not a whisper of applause, moved on with hardly a hitch to say he recognised that this was not feasible in the short term. Ernie Roberts, ex-MP for Hackney North, unknitted his frown.

Feasible socialism

Miliband's dilemma, he told the Conference, was that socialism was 'very poorly represented', while there were 'more socialist activists today than there have ever been'. What makes his dream unfeasible is that most of them already belong to parties which they have no intention of abandoning; indeed, what came close to wrecking the conference was the fact that many had turned up only to shout out the merits of their own party. It would be a sort of street market socialism, except that even the most gullible bargain-hunter rejects the goods as a poor imitation. For those who think a true socialism is feasible, even if a true socialist party is not, the stark question that no-one asked was how to get from this sectarian and stunningly intolerant left to anything remotely resembling their political ambitions. In fact, in the whole two days, only one person called for strategic thinking and an end to disunity. 'There's a lot of talk of traitors and selling out and turning tail,' he said. 'It's very easy to make that sort of contribution. We've got to find some way of working together. The situation *demands* we work together. We should sit down at this conference and work out strategies and tactics. Thatcherism is not going to disappear overnight.' He was hissed and heckled. It was Bernie Grant, leader of Haringey council, the wild man of the popular press, giving by far the most statesmanlike speech of the proceedings. If that struck a chord too, no-one took up the song.

> ***'There was no workshop on the inner city, on direct action and street protest. Nothing on the relentless tightening up of the law on immigration and nationality in an increasingly hostile European climate. Nothing that sought to analyse why and how the Thatcherite right had become so powerful'***

The limits of street fighting and 'individual acts of heroism', which Grant criticised were not discussed. The local government workshop where they *might* have been, drew more Trotskyist members than most and passed a resolution for a new strategy of 'no cuts in jobs or services'. One of the few Communist Party members present, John Peck, who has actually won a seat on Nottingham council, offered an ironic amendment: 'and no snow in winter'. There was no workshop on the inner city, on direct action and street protest. Nothing on the relentless tightening up of the law on immigration and nationality in an increasingly hostile European climate. (Most black activists opted for Anti-Apartheid's national demonstration on Saturday.) Nothing that sought to analyse why and how the Thatcherite right had become so powerful; nothing on why so many were disaffected with any sort of socialism or indeed, with any sort of politics. It was a conference that looked to selected peaks (1917) and troughs (1931) and an array of unspeakable betrayers — Bernstein, Kautsky, Walter Citrine, MacDonald — for guidance. As for today, there is only the struggle.

Fragmented socialism

Reality is however pressing in on fundamental socialism and shaping its future options. Scargill's call for 'county parliaments' and the enthusiasm for regional conferences speaks out a socialism that has been regionally fragmented by the effects of unemployment and Conservative policies. It wasn't that anyone said that the Thatcherite grip over national politics and the central state had left them nowhere to go but their local redoubts. It was rather an unspoken assumption that strategies to outmanoeuvre the right, bid for a new national dominance, work towards control of the central state were all lost causes. Rather there would be an underground network (registered with the Data Protection office), to offer support for those in struggle and solace for those in defeat.

That need has been forged by the reality of Thatcherism and a Labour Party leadership that treats political action outside Parliament as Victorians treated mad and criminal relatives — best locked up or sent abroad. It will undoubtedly give a momentum to some sort of follow-up. So too will original political initiatives, most notably the nervous desire of Women Against Pit Closures, struggling to keep themselves alive, to found a new national women's organisation. The women's sessions, in fact, were the most free from sectarian monopoly (the SWP didn't show: its current response to feminist calls for 'space' is a scornful humph and hiss).

This is not what the conference papers, produced to set the tone of the conference, had promised. Here, thoughts on reality did peep above ground. Ironically, had those who wrote, for instance, the section on public ownership, peppered with such passages as: 'The public sector has, by and large, stifled initiative, eg, in health care. The major innovations have largely come from the private and voluntary cottage economy,' put these thoughts to the conference they called, they would have been howled down as New Realists.

It leaves the organisers with some difficult questions of their own. They all deplore sectarianism. No archbishop is as devout in his belief in ecumenicalism — and no archbishop so wilfully unworldly — as Tony Benn. As the SWP's baying with hatred against the guest speakers from the Soviet Union reached its deafening height, no more than a crease of distaste disturbed his benign outlook. Yet initiatives like these will always be a magnet for sectarian groups because, as one SWP member said, 'they're our target audience'. They have a shared politics of moral absolutes which renders 'new ideas' on what socialism can be in the late 20th century, (as opposed to what people would like it to be) irrelevant. □

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Are women scared to run faster?

ADRIANNE BLUE *says that women are just as good sports as men — and that some sportsmen may* **be** *women*

BECAUSE MEN are presumed to have an advantage in most sports, there is a suspicion in all sports that women who do well may be men in disguise. At the Olympics and other sacred sporting events, it is routine for women — but not men — to undergo sex tests. In 1966, when the sex tests were introduced, they were controversial. They still are. Twenty years on, in 1986, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* questioned their validity and called for an end to the unnecessary indignity of the tests.

In the first year of sex testing, 1966, at every major championship, female athletes lined up, sometimes dressed only in a towel, in the medical officer's waiting room. In turn, each woman walked, passport in hand, into the examining room, dropped the towel, and the examiners had a good look. The British pentathlete Mary Peters remembers dropping the towel at the European Championships in Budapest. But even though, in that first year of sex testing, Mary Peters had already had her genitals gawked at — inside and out — at the Commonwealth Games in Jamaica, she was so fraught at Budapest that she cannot remember how many doctors there were — she thinks about ten — or even whether they were male or female. She was relieved when she again passed the test.

By 1967, the mass strip-teases were over. Now the test was done by a less embarrassing saliva test. Chromosomes looked at under the microscope would reveal any man trying to pass as female. It was in Mexico, in 1968, that the tests were to get their Olympic début.

Before they started, a nervous Mary Peters, who was captain of the British Olympic team, demanded to know what the British officials would do if any of the team failed the new chromosome test. The tests were being conducted in the name of fair play. But they could be terribly unfair in their social effects. 'Supposing a girl just failed the test and was eliminated from the games in a blaze of publicity?' Peters asked the officials. 'A life could be ruined in the very brief time it would take for the news to leak out.'

That was precisely what had happened to Eva Klobukowska. The Polish sprinter, who had been a member of the winning 4 × 100 metres team at the previous Olympics, looked like a woman when you removed the towel but she didn't under the microscope. She passed in Budapest. But in Kiev, at the 1967 European Cup, the six doctors reporting said that Eva Klobukowska had 'one chromosome too many to be declared a woman for the purposes of athletic competition'. It was a sad case; a distraught Klobukowska was stripped of her Olympic and other athletics medals. It was conceded that she was one of the six women in a thousand who seem female in every way, but whose chromosomes are anomalous. Most men have XY chromosomes; most women XX. Hers was the rare XXY genotype. Critics said the test was examining the wrong factor, and it was cruel.

Now Peters proposed a fail-safe plan to protect women on her team. Any athlete who failed the sex test would be rushed to the isolation ward of a hospital, and the press would be told that she had developed a highly contagious disease. The melodramatic British plan did not have to be put into play.

Not 'a real woman'

Mary Peters was not the only one who had been wary of the chromosome sex test. From the start, there were outcries against it. On many counts. There still are. The test is expensive in money and time, and in the psychological stress it puts on female athletes. The American sports psychologist Thomas Tutko was one of the first to point out the underlying message of the sex test: 'It's a way of saying, "If you're this good at sport, you can't be a real woman".'

That the test is an unnecessary indignity has even been recognised by some Olympic officials. As early as 1975, the American representative on the IOC's medical committee, Dr Daniel Hanley, derided sex testing as 'an expensive over-reaction to a remote possibility.'

The controversy continues. In 1986, a detailed article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* by a geneticist, Dr Albert de la Chappelle, of the Department of Medical Genetics at the University of Helsinki, questioned the fairness and even the validity of the tests. 'Neither sex chromatin nor gynaecological examination is suitable for screening purposes,' he said. 'The present screening method is both inaccurate and discriminatory in that it excludes women who should be allowed to participate.' These are the six women in a thousand who look like women, think they are women, and whose body composition, strength and muscle seem entirely female — but who fail the test because they have Y chromosomes.'

The sex test is done with a swab or with a hank of hair. What they are looking for is Barr bodies, which are the genetic difference that results from men having XY chromosomes and women having XX. Men have no Barr bodies; women have them in twenty to fifty per cent of their cell nuclei. A few women, like Eva Klobukowska, have the XX Barr bodies but they also have a Y chromosome. Dr de la Chappell concluded that they were being unfairly 'denied a career in sports'. The *JAMA* editorial called for an end to the tests. 'Eliminating screening would probably have little or no effect' on who won the championships, said the *JAMA*, 'and it might restore a few personal dignities.'

Did you know?

- The youngest person ever to break a non-mechanical world record was New Yorker **Gertrude Ederle** who set a new women's 880 yard freestyle swimming record of 13 minutes 19.0 seconds at Indianapolis, USA, on 17 August 1919, when she was 12 years 298 days old. As if that were not milestone enough, seven years later Ederle tackled the world's then most gruelling long distance swim, becoming on 6 August 1926 the first woman to swim the English Channel. Her time of 14 hours 39 minutes from Cap Gris-Nez, France, to Dover was two hours faster than the existing record.

- The youngest Olympic individual gold medalist, American **Marjorie Gestring**, won the 1936 springboard diving title when she was 13 years 268 days old.

- The youngest ever international, eight-year-old table tennis player **Joy Foster**, represented Jamaica in the West Indies Championships in 1958.

- The youngest ever British international, diver **Beverley Williams**, competed at Crystal Palace against the United States in 1967, when she was ten years 268 days old.

- The longest reigning British champion, archer **Alice Blanche Legh** (1855-1948), won 23 national titles, (1881-1948) in a career which spanned 41 years. Her mother was champion from 1882-1885.

- The oldest ever British international, **Hilda Lorna Johnstone**, placed twelfth in dressage at the 1972 Olympic Games at the age of 70 years five days.

- The most versatile athlete ever, in the impartial view of the *Guinness Book of Records*, was **Charlotte 'Lottie' Dod**

(1871-1960) of Cheshire, England. She won the first of her five Wimbledon ladies singles championships in 1887 when she was three months shy of sixteen (and is still the youngest winner). She became the British Ladies Golf Champion in 1904, Olympic archery silver medalist in 1908, England hockey international in 1899, and a skater and tobogganer to reckon with. In 1888, Dod bested the Wimbledon men's champion in the first exhibition tennis battle of the sexes.

- The runner-up Texan **Mildred 'Babe' Didrikson** (later **Zaharias**) won gold medals at the 80 metre hurdles and the javelin and silver in the high jump at the 1932 Games. The first female 'shamateur', also set a baseball world record and was an all-American basketball player. Her sporting life culminated in fame and fortune as a professional golfer.

- The largest cache of individual Olympic medals is that of Soviet gymnast **Larissa Latynina** who won 18.

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Indeed, if there were competitors who should be barred because they had an unfair advantage, the test was failing to spot them. A hormonal imbalance called adrenal hyperlasia does give one woman in 5,000 the shape and muscular strength of a man; such women have female genitalia and they would pass the chromatin test.

Ever since they talked their way into the Olympics, women have been medically examined far more frequently than men. In 1925, the Olympic Medical Sub-Commission decided that women's 'special functions' and 'special orgaisation' required 'carefully chosen' events, and these had to be 'reduced considerably' in comparison with events for men. There were also clothing regulations 'to prevent regrettable exhibitions'. It is the psychological message — the demeaning subtext — of these and the present sex tests which have caused so much dismay.

The sex test is the pass card of organised sport. It is not, like the pass card of South Africa, intended as an instrument of evil, but it does keep women in their place. In South Africa, the pass card not only allowed the government to keep tabs on the underclass, it also communicated the message to blacks that they were an underclass, that they were under the control of the 'bas' and that there was something so suspicious about them that they required watching. As women don't need a special card in other walks of life, the sex test obliquely tells women that they are second-class citizens in Sportsworld, and that there is something worrying, something suspicious, perhaps even unnatural, about women doing well at sport.

Those who pass are issued with a certificate of femininity so that they need not take the test again and again. Female athletes bring their certificates with them whenever they go to a major competition to compete.

Many athletes have admitted that the prospect of the test has frightened them. Most are still in adolescence, like Debbie Meyer, at an age when personal insecurity is frequent. More than one coach has wondered if it is the psychological barrier of the sex test rather than any lack of speed and muscle that keeps women from running the four-minute mile — when times in the 1,500 metres show clearly that they have the ability.

Women do excel at those sports which are not considered to be particularly musculine or masculising. They now outride men at the top levels of equestrian sport, for instance. Yet what is innately female about riding a horse? Nothing surely. It takes enormous athleticism: strength in the thighs, and the courage to jump fences and speed forward in a sport that is known for spills and injury. Equestian sport has always been expensive (horses eat a lot; so do trainers), hence it has attracted riders of high social status, rich enough to afford the sport. Princess Anne was no exception in this respect. And as cute little girls love ponies, women who ride well are not made to put their womanhood in question. Hence they can win the world championship and the competiton at Badminton, as they have, even though they compete against men.

Are women scared to run faster than men lest their femininity come under suspicion? Ten years ago, a top female athlete muttered that it was unfeminine for a woman to run the 100 metres faster than 11 seconds. Now women have done it; but not that one. And perhaps some woman who could run even faster dares not. Would the roughly ten per cent difference between the male and female record be diminished even more, be overcome, if women didn't have that psychological worry too? Is it this which keeps them from throwing further, and from swimming faster and further than men, as often as they could?

Anomalies and masquerades

Which is not to say there have been no anomalies or masquerades. A few unscrupulous men, probably in cahoots with unscrupulous governments, have pretended to be female athletes. But more often it has been a question of sad cases — a hermaphrodite ruled against, or individuals who were genetically male but had reason to believe they were female, and others who simply very much wished they were.

In 1938, the German high-jumper Dora Ratjen, who set a world record of five feet seven inches, was found to have both male and female sexual organs. She was banned, and although she had lived as a woman previously, she changed her name to Hermann.

Two Frenchwomen in the 1946 European silver-medal-winning relay team later were found to be living as Frenchmen. Claire had become Pierre; Lea was Léon. Whether they had pretended to be women or whether they were later pretending to be men was not absolutely clear.

The downhill skier Erika Schineggar was caught with her chromosomes down in the first year of the tests. It was said that her male sex organs had been hidden inside her body since birth. With sublime self-possession, Erika later changed her name to Eric, married, and became a father. For the Polish sprinter Eva Klobukowska, however, the discovery had been only tragic.

In 1980, elderly Mrs Stella Olsen, the former Stella Walsh, was shot dead during a robbery in Cleveland, Ohio, an innocent bystander. The autopsy revealed that the 1932 Olympic 100 metre sprint champion, who had won 42 American national titles, had male sex organs.

The most notorious case involved two Russian sisters, Tamara and Irina Press, who dropped out of world competition just before the sex tests were to be introduced. Because of the timing of their retirement, it was *presumed* in the West that they had something to hide. The rumour was that the muscular sisters were really the Press brothers.

Tamara Press had had an impressive career: she held the world shot-put record from 1959 to 1965, and the world discus record from 1960 to 1965. At the 1960 Olympics, she won gold at the shot put and was the silver medallist in the discus; in 1964 she won gold in both events. Irina, two years younger, was the finest hurdler in the world. In 1960, she became the Olympic 80 metres hurdles champion; in 1964, she scored gold at pentathlon with a world record of 5,246 points. The sisters had racked up a total of five gold medals in two Olympics.

There is no proof that the Presses' retirement at the ages of 29 and 27 was in any way connected with the introduction of the sex tests. There are dozens of reasons why the sisters might have retired: after so many years at the top in sports that required arduous training, they may have had enough or simply have gone stale. The sisters were close; if one withdrew, it was understandable that the other did too. And there might have been family reasons, or injury problems.

Yet maybe the Press sisters really were the Press brothers. The point is that we do not know. To this day, they claim to be sisters. Tamara Press, who turned 50 in May 1987, lives by herself in the Lenin Hills in a three-room apartment. She has a Ph.D in education, holds a high-level administrative job in recreation and has found time to write two memoirs. It is said that Tamara Press swims regularly at a local pool.

The younger of the two, Irina Press, also has a Ph.D. in sports education. She lives in two rooms, likes to attend first nights at the theatre, and works in the grounds of Moscow's oldest stadium, as chief of sports education at the Dynamo Sports Society. Irina takes some of the credit for the success of Dynamo's athletes. The two sisters, I am told, are great friends although they live their own lives. Twice a month they run three or four kilometres together in a city park. This is one Westerner who would like to go and have a talk — and look through the family photograph album.

Far more commonplace in world history is the fact of women disguising themselves as men: Joan of Arc; seventeenth-century foot soldiers; ordinary refugees trying to avoid rape; not to mention Shakespeare's Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and Vita Sackville-West on her very bohemian Paris sojourn. Women have usually disguised themselves as men to gain autonomy — safety on the street, the right to earn a living, perhaps also the right to participate in sport.

In fact, the very first sex test in Olympic sport, way back in ancient Greece, was instituted to keep women from disguising themselves as men. Athletes and trainers had to pass naked as they arrived at the ancient Olympics lest any women sneak in. It is surely unlikely that women have suddenly stopped masquerading as men. In some endurance sports — long-distance swimming certainly, the marathon and equestrian sport (which has both single-sex and mixed-sex competition) possibly, and others — women even have a yet-to-be-properly-tapped physical advantage. There are no sex tests for men. When there are more women for coaches to choose from, will they sneak a few on to the men's team?

It would be an extreme and unlovely use of women for national pride; it would call for a huge sacrifice: the woman would have to become a man. It is unlikely that many could live a false life from childhood ever after — for unless one covered one's tracks thoroughly, someone would find out. It is equally unlikely the Press sisters could have sprung grown from the head of some sports scentist. Surely, Tamara and Irina grew up somewhere. Someone remembers their childhood.

It is, however unlikely, perfectly possible that in the future women could be sneaked on to men's teams. Indeed, in the early years of the century, many of the top male athletes were no more fit and no more muscular than strong countrywomen. Even now one finds some hefty rural Amazons about. It is entirely possible that some of the great purportedly male Olympians of the twentieth century were — and are? — women. □

This is excerpted from Grace Under Pressure: the Emergence of Women in Sport, *by Andrianne Blue. Published by Sidgwick and Jackson on 5 Nov.*

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ARTS

DANCE

Don't play with my tutu

Stephanie Jordan

Extemporary Dance Theatre
The Place
Rosas
Riverside Studios
The Cholmondeleys
The Place

TRADITIONAL IMAGES of women are questioned by a number of groups appearing in this year's Dance Umbrella festival. Some pose the questions directly, making them a core issue: Extemporary Dance Theatre, DV8, the Urban Bush Women from New York. Others simply present a forceful alternative image as the baseline of their choreography.

Certainly there remains much to question; the archetypal woman in ballet is fundamentally the product of a male sensibility and is so often used as the embodiment of male sexual anxieties. Whereas some female choreographers will make use of this ballet stereotype in order to deconstruct it, others will altogether deny the customary female dancerly attributes of slimness, coyness, gentleness, refinement. Others still enter into methods of partnering the opposite sex that stress the dancers' intelligence and skill, rather than the brute values of unmatched strength.

Extemporary Dance Theatre's new project, *Grace and Glitter*, co-choreographed by Emilyn Claid and Maggie Semple, is designed, composed and performed entirely by women. Matters important to women are what it is about, and it draws upon the research and experience of performers and choreographers alike. It explores what touches black women (a prominent feature of the work), the experiences of young and older women, friendships and jealousies between women and, the programme stresses, the development of women's eroticism 'as a considered force of power and information within our lives' (quoting Audre Lorde). A recorded text by Tasha Fairbanks returns regularly over the action, telling of an old woman contemplating younger generations, the 'grace and glitter of the girls', 'a tidal flood of women down the years'. The treatment of ideas is episodic, some sections narrative or character-based, with frictions arising from partner swapping, with stilettoed, tight-skirted, bottoms-out caricatures and women of all ages and types at a party or parading in the street. There are also pure dance sections, some free and athletic, some the occasion for peaceful, real-self absorption, a release after the confinement of characterisation.

At its worst, *Grace and Glitter* is yet another exhibition at the feminists' rogues' gallery, with the usual *bêtes noires* — the doleful prostitutes, the strippers, the ballet girl in her tutu — hung out or blandly dismissed. It is too simplistic; scarcely anyone could disagree. The choreography 'bits' are interludal and pleasant but unmemorable.

Kaye Brown demonstrating the grace (if not precisely the glitter) of Extemporary Dance Threatre

More progressive, indeed moving, is the spirit of the six dancers as they work together, the innocence of their youth, their guts, their tenderness and their thorough at-homeness with one another in close embrace. The three black women groom each others' hair affectionately and inform us of the stories that get passed on during such intimate activity; an early duet, 'Sisters', for two black women in black bikinis and boots, becomes a challenge as it demonstrates strength meeting strength, physical boldness in open-legged squats, pleasure as the women take each other's weight.

The directors' plan is to let the piece evolve, to allow flexibility so that it can change, and they are eager to know how different audiences will respond to their work. Women's groups around the country will be incorporated into the structure as *Grace and Glitter* reaches their home venues —

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an exciting idea, especially as they will bring to it maturity and will start work from their own real experience, not, as in many outreach projects, from the theatrical unreality of steps.

The **Rosas** women from Belgium appear confident of the full power of their maturity, even their sensuality; that is the great strength behind the choreographer AnnaTeresa De Keersmaeker's *Bartok/Aantekeningen*. Here, in a kind of sports hall (or, perhaps, asylum), four women in black dresses and stiletto heels are confined. Having dressed down into girlish skirts and black boots, they enact an appropriate kind of obsessive, alienated behaviour, either apart or huddled into a team. We understand the asylum metaphor from the narration of Charlotte Corday's monologues from the *Marat/Sade* and from the set, which evokes memories of the Peter Brook production. The asylum is a society where life is ordered and spent within earshot of violence. A final bleakness is emphasised by recitations from Georg Büchner's *Lenz*. Bartok's 4th String Quartet has the ferocity and intellect to become a useful support for such setting and De Keersmaeker understands its changes of mood by offering respite in the two scherzo sections, with amusing contrapuntal trickery and the girls throwing up their skirts to display white knickers. Old home movies of children playing with a dog and a research film demonstrating the impact of car collision on a dummy add their contrasting tones.

The style and commitment of these performers is astonishing: a haunted presence, swirling, stamping, lashing out in a compulsive fury or gliding smoothly from hip to hip. De Keersmaeker works with the trance-inducing effect of repetition, but increases her language and rhythmic subtlety as the work develops. Yet, curiously, the impression left is of artistic *chic*. This is a peculiarly self-imposed, self-generated violence, continually revitalising itself and ultimately seductive,as these women certainly are. I am not sure that this was what De Keersmaeker really wanted.

If this is European sophistication, the four **Cholmondeleys** are honest-to-goodness, down-to-earth English and their choreographer, Lea Anderson, is happy to indulge a sisterly, dumpling image to a beefy pulse, both physical and musical, accumulating her women into matching foursomes, choosing baggy costumes, tunics, big skirts or smock coats. The appearance is of a sort of disarming, wide-eyed innocence and such a façade serves to increase the impact of the wicked quotations or the tormented and cruel streak that, in some pieces, cannot be suppressed as one or other Cholmondeley clasps her head tight or presses a hand into another's face. For some time, this group has been presenting dances of cabaret-sketch length, but, in her new *The Big Dance Number*, Anderson demonstrates that she is well able to feed larger structures with the necessary density of ideas. □

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CINEMA

Diabolical liberties

Judith Williamson

The Witches of Eastwick (18)
Cannons Shaftesbury Ave, Fulham Road; Screen on the Green

A WIDE, AERIAL shot of a small New England town; the camera moves slowly down over the rooftops of white wooden buildings, into that perfect picture of orderliness familiar from countless films.

But which films? This could be the Sirkian suburbia of *All That Heaven Allows*, where 'all hell breaks loose' (metaphorically) when a middle-aged woman rediscovers her sexuality. It could be the creepily harmonious Stepford, whose Wives wear compulsory frilly aprons and discuss nothing but recipes. It could be the small, enclosed community of *The Birds*, where old residents tut-tut over newcomers and the sky holds unknown fears.

The Witches of Eastwick is all of these: the extraordinary thing about this film (whose director, George Miller, made the *Mad Max* series) is its generic lawlessness. Rather than falling into any one category — melodrama, with its stress on 'women's problems'; sf, the 'bodysnatchers' genre of personality change; horror, with all the powers of the supernatural at its disposal — it incorporates aspects of them all. And it does this not simply as a bricolage, a tacking together of generic trademarks, but through very self-conscious reference: for example, a little old woman who owns a shop remarkably like the one in *The Birds* is shown talking about the town's new resident — Daryl Van Horne — with a bizarrely-angled model of a seagull in the corner of the shot.

So here is a strange phenomenon: a horror film that isn't frightening, a melodrama that isn't heart-wrenching, sf that isn't spooky. The film is, however, funny. With a horror plot which resembles *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary's Baby*, its scripting and playing resemble rather the *9 to 5* comedy genre of whacky women sticking up for their rights — in this case against the Devil.

The film offers no single framework by which to interpret its events. Its meanings are products less of a consistently coded narrative (as in most films) than of constantly shifting *references*, both to the language of other films and to social discourses, specifically those of Women's Liberation and the New Man.

For the 'witches' are women without men: one widowed, one deserted, one divorced. A feminist angle on their situation is established at the start of the film as the objectionable headmaster uses the opportunity of Jane's (Susan Sarandon's) divorce to fondle her bottom. As he drones on at speech day, the three friends simultaneously wish for something to happen: then a thunderstorm halts the proceedings. When they wish for the perfect man to arrive, Daryl Van Horne — Jack Nicholson in a completely mad ponytail — moves into a disused gothic mansion and seduces them in turn.

He does this by offering each exactly what she wants: and this is where New-Man-dom comes in. While the women's specifications include things like size of penis, Daryl himself has a quite remarkable capacity for anti-patriarchal analysis. To the creative, restless Alexandra (Cher) he bemoans her energies wasted on repetitive housework. With Jane, a cellist, he brings out her musical depths and repressed passion; with Sukie (Michelle Pfeiffer), mother of six, he wheels out his admiration and envy of 'what you can do with your bodies . . . make babies . . . make milk . . .' The three women end up a cosy threesome as Daryl's harem, eating, drinking, flying (!) and fucking.

The spoken language of the seductions is taken from real-life feminism; but the visual forms are a series of exaggerated film clichés. Jane's cello 'burning with passion' actually catches fire; the measure of the women 'letting their hair down' is to have it stick out in a frizzy perm (obviously sex makes your hair curl). The harem itself is like a special effects fun-palace; meanwhile, the demonology element is carried by the respectable townswoman Felicia who 'knows' evil is present and is punished by Daryl's speciality, remote-control vomiting.

It appears to be Felicia's death and Eastwick's general disapproval that finally stop the women seeing Daryl (though it could also be seen as boredom, or the return of the superego.) After attempting to woo them back with phone calls and flowers, Daryl switches to using his supernatural powers to punish them with their worst nightmares. Yet when we next see him he is doing his ironing in front of a portable TV balanced on a marble staircase — the very image of hard-pressed bachelorhood, in the incongruous setting of the gothic mansion.

This scene epitomises the film's technique. In demonic-horror-film terms, the devil has absolutely no need to iron his own shirts. But here we are presented with a moment of bedsit Play-for Today drama, and treated to a speech that could be described as New Man's Complaint: 'I was everything you wanted . . . did you ever care about my needs? I want a little attention . . . trust' and so on. And when the women return — pregnant — Daryl rushes out in a *pink dufflecoat* — surely the sartorial apex of New Man-dom — to meet their cravings for ice-cream. It is precisely at this point that the women turn the tables and start to torture him.

What makes this daft film fascinating is that, while its melée of genres refuses us any one 'filmic reality', its thematic concerns are very real indeed. In dealing with a shifting balance of power between the New Man/Devil and the three Liberated Sisters/Witches it allows multiple points of entry to the viewer, none of which is privileged by the film itself. Its inconsistent narrative fits perfectly the confusion about roles

TRAILERS

A Gay and Lesbian Film Weekend is being held at Cinema City, Norwich from 30 Oct-1 Nov. Many of the films reviewed in *NS* 9 October are showing; further details from 0603-622047.

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and desires that characterises these issues. For the bizarre series of natural and supernatural events is no less perplexing than the mysterious fact that Modern Woman thinks she conjures into being New Man but doesn't like him when she gets him. □

THEATRE

Badlands blues

Victoria Radin

A Lie of the Mind
SAM SHEPARD *Royal Court*
The Living Room
GRAHAM GREENE *Royalty*

'THE ICON of the id' was how *Time* magazine, in a six-page cover story, described Sam Shepard; whatever one thinks of that term, it goes some way towards explaining his current popularity both in the USA and in id-less Britain. Whereas most writers — of plays or of fiction, or even of poetry — trawl only the superficies of their experience, Shepard appears to have ready access to the depths. His work throws up Loch Ness monsters — violent hunting men, loopy women lost in their own memories — who are tied together in a crazy courtly dance that makes them all fall down. They appear and reappear throughout his work, in slightly different configurations, sporting a new horn or hoof. Shepard believes in them completely: he has gone down on his knees and shaken hands with them and found them friendly and funny; and that unbudgeable belief in his private myths translates itself. His plays are exorcisms: not the exorcism of a neurosis but the exhalation of dreams.

There is a sense in which you could compare him to Proust, a cowboy Proust of the television age; and the first epigraph of the printed text of **A Lie of the Mind** (published by Methuen at £3.95) contains a Proust-like comment from Cesar Vallejo on the impossibility of being with the loved one when he/she is present. The emotional focus of this play, as in *Fool for Love* and Shepard's screenplay (co-written with Wim Wenders) for *Paris, Texas*, is an obsessional sexual love that destroys a couple. Jake (the American Will Patton) has battered his wife Beth (Miranda Richardson) into brain damage; yet he yearns for her and she feels 'dead' without him: 'He killed us both,' she says. Their recovery, in a manner of speaking, takes place separately in their parents' homes, typically Shepardian isolated hearths out in the badlands of the western USA where deranged solipsism runs amok and the bad blood drips through the generations. Jake, it seems, is repeating the behaviour of his father, an Air Force pilot (like Shepard's) who deserted his family out of some indecipherable need for flight. Beth's blow-inflicted nuttiness, too, travels backwards through the generations of her womenfolk: her grandmother had lost her wits. Her mother, Meg (Deborah Norton), believes that it was she herself who was put away. 'That was your mother,' her husband Baylor (Tony Haygarth) informs her. He is also in flight, living in a hut outside the house, intent on killing the deer he doesn't even enjoy eating.

Men love women — and then helplessly destroy them, leaving them addled in the brain. 'Who's Jake?' Meg asks of her daughter's husband. 'Who's Beth? Some bimbo,' queries Jake's mother Lorraine (Geraldine McEwan), whose disappointment with her husband and her son's virtual parricide out in Mexico has turned the mother/son rapport into a parody of the Oedipus myth. 'Love. What a crock of shit,' says Lorraine, going on to label it a 'disease'. It is also the lie that the mind spells out, from which one can escape only by dying or going barmy.

In this play Shepard heaves in all the themes of his recent work: love, the bad seed or dynastic 'curse', the unwilling, martyred paterfamilias, his splintered wife, warring siblings — and he sets it all down in the sort of intellectually barren, mock-heroic prairie-desert towns that grew up when someone's ancestor first threw his horse's halter around a stump. In fact, there are too many themes here.

I first saw the play two years ago in New York: directed by Shepard with the self-regarding Harvey Keitel and Amanda Plummer as lovers who exerted no visible pull on one another or, indeed, on us, it failed for me (though not for the New York critics). Simon Curtis' London production is steadier and less indulgent: it allows the tropism of the two lovers — with Miranda Richardson giving a quite extraordinarily true performance — to drive the play forward. It exacts measured treatment by Deborah Norton and Tony Haygarth as Beth's invincibly loopy parents; and all of the characteristically black yet loving humour that one recognises as Shepard's province.

There are moments of terrific poignancy when the characters go into arias which describe those subjective sensations which we never otherwise hear about but can all recognise and which is one of Shepard's special gifts. There are also a host of symbols, up to and including no less than the American flag that Jake winds round himself — you can also see shades of *Hamlet* and *The Seagull* if you're so inclined — that lend the play a certain specious weightiness or public feeling which may have also accounted for its good critical reception over here. Ultimately it is a bit too knowing, fuller but also considerably more diagrammatic than Shepard's other recent works. Yet, like them, it continues to rumble in the brain, urging one into private mythopoeia.

A similar disability afflicted Graham Greene, I think, when in 1953 (shortly after *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair*) he wrote a play which is a skeletal rendering of his favourite themes of adultery, betrayal, Catholicism and the vulnerable credulity of women. **The Living Room** throws us into them, head first, *in medias res*, and we haven't even the mellowing faculty of Greene's prose or our imaginations to help them take on flesh. I found they didn't: Bryan Forbes' grey production, despite decent performances from Peter Bythe as a tortured husband/lover, Katherine Schlesinger as his girl and Dulcie Gray and Judy Campbell as two dotty elderly siblings somewhere in the Shepard mould, couldn't rescue an improbable hyperbolic shriek from the less gracious outposts of Greene's personal mythology. □

POLICY

Women in the arts

Naseem Khan

THE LABOUR PARTY'S decision to concentrate on women in the arts, in its arts Parliamentary Question Time on 2 November and at previous press conferences, will seem perverse to some: a focus on yesterday's issues that, the consensus says, are being solved nicely. Certainly, people might allow, there were problems in the early '80s when research showed only 12 per cent of theatre directors in 119 theatres were women. But since then, the Cork Report, 'Theatre for All', has talked optimistically about an improvement with a new generation. Presumably time has brought similar improvements across the arts.

Improvements? Women in the museum service would not endorse that optimism. A mere 20 per cent of museum directors are women. Visual artists would also have complaints. The Tate, for instance, has mounted 206 individual shows between 1910 and 1986. Eight of them have been by women artists. Music offers little consultation. Over the last five years, the Arts Council has commissioned 360 composers. Twenty-two of them have been women. All BBC Controllers of Music have been men. All the major orchestras are run by men. Principals of music colleges or conservatoires are men.

But striking though the figures are, they are only a crude idex of inequality, capable of massage and manipulation. Far more to the point is what women actually *do* in the arts, and what real power they have.

The Cork Report was sanguine about the situation in theatre. Caroline Gardiner, Research Fellow of the City University, would not endorse this stand. Her report, 'A Fair Slice of the Cake?' (commissioned by the Women's Playhouse Trust), examined the position of women in theatre with admirable closeness. She shows conclusively that 'for almost every level of appointment that might be expected to have a significant impact on theatre policy, even when women hold such posts, they are disadvantaged in monetary terms, and therefore in terms of artistic scope, compared with men in the same posts'.

Cork had some excuse. The figures, on the face of it, can be read as showing some improvement. Thirty-four per cent of women now feature as directors. But the question is, with what sort of companies? Only 15 per cent, for instance, work with building-based companies (and control 13 per cent of the total funding). The greater majority are on the road, touring (and control 33 per cent of the funding). There are only two women artistic directors with companies getting over £250,000 Arts Council funding. Women, in short, are likely to be artistic directors of companies that are perceived as being of lesser importance — small-scale, touring, those with small auditoria and/or low funding. The pattern repeats itself across the theatrical spectrum with depressing regularity. In design, 'the only one of the senior posts researched in which women could be said to have a reasonable parity with men', that tolerance is only London-wide. Ninety per cent of the senior posts out of London are held by men. Women designers are

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also, Gardiner demonstrated, more likely to work for companies employing less than ten people, with seating for fewer than 400 and with, consequently, lower design budgets and fewer assistant design staff than men.

In theory, or so optimistic spirits will claim, the larger number of women at the base of the pyramid will force their way eventually into the upper echelons. But can this really be relied on? First, the jobs that women do are self-limiting. They are the small, the fraught and the cheap. Can the leap really be made fom the Soho Poly to the RSC? The same is true on the technical side where the jobs employing women 'offer less ambitious technical projects and fewer opportunities to improve and extend their technical skills.' No great springboard.

The theory of time's healing role is questioned by the experience of the City University itself, where arts administration courses have been running for 13 years — time enough for women to have worked their way up into senior administrative posts: 'This is not the case.'

One particular condition, interestingly, seems to favour the rise of women. Both Caroline Gardiner's research and Nicola Lefanu's in music (from which my music figures are mainly derived) build a strong case for the benign effect of women in senior posts. Other women are then more likely to be appointed to positions of authority. Where the director is a women also, a company is far more likely to stage plays by women.

There are signs that Richard Luce, the Arts Minister, has himself become concerned by gender bias. Last May he urged arts organisations to appoint women to their boards. (Three of the National's 15 are women, one of the Royal Opera House's 14, and so on.)

But the figures indicate the need for a far more thoroughgoing policy if equality is to have any meaning. In America women-led firms get preference for certain kinds of government contracts. A similar idea in the arts could prove wonderfully liberalising. At the very least, the Arts Council should urgently review its own Equal Opportunities strategy. Labour has played a useful role in focusing attention on a persistent evil. □

MUSIC

Under Khrennikov

Christopher Rice

THE CULMINATION of the BBC's *The Arts and Glasnost* season will be a series of programmes devoted to the life and music of Dmitrii Shostakovich*, arguably the greatest Soviet composer this century. Among those taking part will be Tikhon Khrennikov, still, at 77, First Secretary of the official Union of Composers. Had Shostakovich been alive today, and had he been free to express an opinion, he would hardly have welcomed a tribute from such a quarter. For it was Khrennikov who, in 1948, led the denunciations of Shostakovich, Prokofiev and other 'formalist' (Western-leaning) composers after receiving the green light from Stalin's cultural lieutenant, Andrei Zhdanov.

Now that the Writers' Union is presided over by Vladimir Karpov, a former victim of Stalin's purges, and the Filmmakers' Union by Elem Klimov, much of whose best work was rejected by the censors, Khrennikov's continued presence at the helm of the Soviet musical establishment appears somewhat incongruous, especially as his own compositions are, by common consent, undistinguished. Indeed, recent press criticism has revealed both the steady decline of Soviet musical standards and the impatience of the authorities with composers and musicologists reluctant to move with the times.

The sluggishness of the musicians was nowhere more apparent than during the proceedings of the seventh congress of the Composers' Union, which took place during April 1986. In marked contrast to the congresses of other arts unions, it turned out to be a complacent, even somnolent affair, paying no more than lip service to Gorbachev's demands for fundamental restructuring and for open, honest and self-critical debate. Evidently, little has changed in the interim. A scathing report in the government newspaper, *Izvestiya*, reveals an organisation dominated by ageing bureaucrats, short on creative talent but happy to carry on accepting routine payments from the State for compositions which are rarely, if ever, performed. This cosy arrangement is subsidised by the light entertainment side of the business, which includes, ironically, the despised rock bands. Payments for their performances are received by the USSR Music Fund, which in turn finances the Union of Composers.

Of course, the union is by no means bereft of genuinely talented musicians. Take Alfred Shnitke, for example. A composer who has always striven for originality, Shnitke's compositions are now being premiered in the West, where they are presented as a showpiece of musical *glasnost*, of what is possible in the Soviet Union today. Yet, until recently, concerts of his music were inexplicably cancelled at the last minute and his achievements ignored by the very people who are now offering him up for the approval of their Western counterparts.

Shnitke has achieved respectability at the age of 52. What are the chances of the younger generation having their more adventurous works heard and performed before they too reach middle age? Not very high, if the testimony of the Georgian composer Aleksei Machavariani is to be believed. His account of musical life in the post-*glasnost* era reveals the frustrations typically encountered by the young Soviet composer of today. Even the best work is unlikely to see publication. Orchestras are not keen to try out new compositions, sometimes because they are incapable of performing them. If a new work is heard in Georgia, the chances are it will probably not reach the attention of wider Soviet audiences, let alone Western ones. Recording opportunities are like gold dust and the product often disappears in a welter of red tape. Most dispiriting of all, the Georgian musical establishment betrays all the shortcomings of its Moscow counterpart, but writ larger. Machavariani depicts it as a closed network of mutual admiration societies, cliques and cabals, with two or three figures monopolising all the important musical posts.

If the musical establishment appears remote and out of touch to young composers in the official union, it is light years away from the interests and concerns of young people in general. In the West, perhaps, this would hardly be cause for comment, but in the Soviet Union it is a highly worrying phenomenon. For, there, art is seen as an important vehicle for disseminating social values. Music, for example, *should* promote the 'revolutionary' qualities of patriotism, social progress, peace and humanism. All the recent evidence, however, suggests that while official music leaves young people cold and that this channel of propaganda is therefore closed, unofficial rock and pop music is undeniably popular but makes no attempt to promote the required value system, at least to the satisfaction of those in power.

It is not wholly surprising that, while the programmes devoted to film, art and literature in the *Arts and Glasnost* series have looked towards the future, the focus in the case of music will be on a titan from the past; himself as much a victim as a beneficiary of the Soviet system. □

Programmes on the life and work of Shostakovich will be transmitted on BBC2 on 7, 8, 14, 21 and 28 November, and on BBC1 on 28 November.

TELEVISION

Charmer of war

Hugo Williams

THERE IS A CLASSIC tussle going on for the prime Sunday night 9.00 position, both sides putting up typical but tempting contenders. What do you do? LWT, brows pulled well down, is running **The Charmer** (ITV), a '30s con-man recipe dressed in the slightly fashionable Nigel Havers. Auntie is serving the irreproachable **Fortunes of War** (BBC1), the sort of high-tech translation to the screen that we feel lets us off that bit of book-reading of a Sunday night — in this case, lots of autobiographical novels by Olivia Manning. Neither is at all bad and it is perfectly possible, even without a remote, to do the decent thing and watch both at once (though you do have to be alone to do this, or you drive everyone mad).

The fun is in the contrast of acting styles, the tabloid versus the broadsheet, both good of their kind. Havers is your typical early-evening ITV-man, stretched to his limits here, and beyond, but cast with such Machiavellian accuracy that it is the rest of the production that has to struggle for reality. Kenneth Branagh, on the other hand, late of Ibsen's *Ghosts* and man of destiny to *Fortunes of War*, is *the* heavyweight contender for the 'new Olivier' tag, so you feel you have to look up to him no matter how little he does for you. While Havers is doing his nut to light cigarettes in an attractive manner, Branagh is doing practically nothing with the help of a superior script.

Branagh specialises in intellectuals; indeed, it is almost impossible to imagine his wise, lipless face doing anything else. As the Audenesque Guy Pringle, the history man marooned behind WWII in ostensibly neutral Rumania, he is therefore almost as well cast as Havers is in his role.

The public usually confuses great with serious acting, light with lesser stuff. In fact, both these performances are about equally good and both

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pretty predictable. Watching them simultaneously, I couldn't help re-casting them in each other's roles, just to jolt them out of their complacency. Havers, the twitchy minor public schoolboy, hair fluffed to balance a Cardew Robinson profile, represented the decency, Englishness and historical perspective of the Bucharest expatriate community by repeatedly flexing his jaw muscles. Branagh, everyone's favourite history master, is suddenly obliged to do lots of pre-war cigarette acting, sing 'Baby, you're the tops, you're the Tower of Pisa' with a phoney American accent and get caught with his hand up an older woman's bank account. The more I flicked, the more I liked it. Isn't it exactly the kind of twist fate specialises in? Are *you* well cast in your life? Perfect casting, particularly on TV where individual performances get separated from the main herd like sheep in *One Man and His Dog*, often seal characters in aspic. It does so here.

For cross-viewing purposes, all you need to know is that Havers is a blazered nobody in a sports car, currently trying to subsidise his bid for an heiress (Fiona Fullerton) by going to bed with the excellent Rosemary Leach ('My cousin says that if we buy *today* . . .'), while Branagh is the Good Samaritan who spreads himself too thin, the visionary with a fatal blind spot for his wife (Emma Thompson). Their faults are novelish. *Fortunes* is almost *too* rich and might have made a better play. *The Charmer* starts well then gropes its way down-market into a murder story, like a blind man trying to get out of a room. Unless you get tied up with some of the splendid cameo parts in *Fortune of War* (are Ronald Pickup and James Villiers still alive?) and forget to switch back after the commercials, you should find that these two roughly contemporaneous series mix very nicely for a week or two.

And, if you aren't quite ready for bed after all that confusion, you might consider staying up for **The New Statesman** (ITV), a knockabout political farce seemingly written especially for the Rik Mayall character in *The Young Ones* for when (and if) he ever 'grew up'. Alan B'stard (Rik Mayall) is one of Maggie's new striped shirts at Westminster, a clown for today whose humour is derived, like that of Mr Punch, from his whole-heartedly two-dimensional character: lust and greed. He is quite like *The Charmer* really; weak, randy and deceitful, but more charming because he has no charm whatever, only a mirthless pop-eyed grin which lights up his handsome features at the slightest mention of his 'special interests' — 'A million! That's my favourite number!' — and vanishes completely at the thought of danger or responsibility. Last Sunday's episode wasn't as funny as usual, but the scripts by Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, not noticeably 'alternative' writers, can rise to a fine absurdity: 'His doctor ordered him to go to bed and suck a Fisherman's Friend.'

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Books

Yakov Shteinberg

Red Guard patrol of workers from the Putilov factory in Petrograd, November 1917

REVOLUTIONARY

What is to be done tomorrow?

Tamara Deutscher

Lenin: The Novel
ALAN BRIEN *Secker* £11.95

MR BRIEN's is an imaginative biography of an imaginary Lenin presented in the form of a diary. It will raise, unjustifiably, the hackles of quite a few historians and scholars. Unjustifiably but understandably: they have spent the best years of their lives studying 'the first sources', poring over the yellowed copies of *Pravda* and *Iskra*, ploughing through volume upon volume of stenographic reports of innumerable Congresses and Conferences, and here comes Mr Brien, with a light hand picking all the juicy bits, shedding with a thud the enormous and useless ballast of theoretical debates, the whole heavy stuff of dialectical materialism, imperialism, Marxism-Leninism. Also Mr Brien's flamboyant style makes his *Lenin* so much more entertaining than any of the rather pedestrian, didactic writings of his hero.

Mr Brien's Lenin starts his diary on the day of the old Ulyanov's death in Simbirsk and keeps on recording his reflections and events till his last illness in 1923. Thus we can follow him right through his wanderings in Russia, in his Siberian exile, then as a refugee in Paris, London, Geneva and other European cities, until his return to St Petersburg already in the throes of the great upheaval, and during the first few years of Soviet power.

All doubts about the genuineness of the diary are dispelled when we come — with Lenin — to London: 'English politics drive every continental socialist to despair . . . As Marx observed, this country has not only a bourgeois bourgeoisie, but also a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat.' (Dated 10 August 1902).

Mr Brien has a fertile imagination; he has also done some homework and has acquired what at my school used to be called 'good grounding' in Russian history. Most of the dates are given correctly and the few mistakes could easily be corrected with the help of the useful crib *Lenin Chronik* (G. & H. Weber, Hansen, Verlag, Munich 1974) which contains 1,800 entries relating to Lenin's life and work.

Mr Brien views Lenin sympathetically, and with benevolence, as the great man of our epoch geared to one purpose, that of overthrowing the old autocratic social order; he knows the titles of Lenin's major works, deals with his major preoccupations and inner party struggles. The entries in the diary tell us precisely where Lenin was, what he was doing, thinking and feeling on any particular day. The dramatic events of the

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'July Days' of 1917 are even reported half-hourly, cover nearly 50 pages and are considerably enlivened by conversations, reported verbatim, with other historic personalities.

No wonder some Leninologists will be green with envy. All right, we all knew that Lenin's mother-in-law died on 20 March 1915. But who among us could boast of the knowledge that Lenin mended his own clothes or that upon his return to revolutionary Moscow he slept on pillows 'decorated with hammers and sickles cut out of gold paper'? Or that he snatched a nap in the exquisite bedroom of 'the former Tsar's former mistress's secretary's maid'?

The blurb of *Lenin: The Novel* informs us that Gorky wondered whether anyone could 'chart the secret storms of Lenin's soul'. Now this has been done! 'Alan Brien has taken on that challenge in an epic and daring novel,' the publishers assure us. Indeed, who before Mr Brien was ever aware of the storm that engulfed Lenin's soul on 21 June 1917 when Kerensky ('the little shit') was still at the height of his power: ' . . . I sit here clutching the molten turmoil of my guts. I am condemned to hear yet more bad tidings.' And so are we.

There were also storms of a more intimate nature. On 12 May 1987 he confessed: 'My loins pump out jet of heat at thought of Appolinaria'. Other storms were provoked by Inessa. Thirty-six hours after having met her, Lenin revealed, ' . . . we were floating on a torrent of talk. I saw, without seeing, that she was taking off her clothes, that she was turning back the quilt on the floor mattress, still talking . . . I imitated her, slid naked under the quilt . . .'

Of course, the diary of Mr Brien's *Lenin* is a huge joke. Of course, *non e vero*, in places it is even *assai ben trovato*. The trouble, however, is that the essence of wit is brevity. Mr Brien's volume is over 700 pages long. □

Tamara Deutscher's edition of her husband Isaac Deutscher's essays, Marxism, Wars and Revolution, *was published last year by Verso.*

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REVOLUTION

In at the birth

Cathy Porter

Storming the Heavens
ed. MARK JONES *Zwan* £14.95

'ONLY ONE WHO HAS lived through a revolution knows the grandeur of it,' said Nadezhda Krupskaya. For two centuries, Petrograd stood stranded on the edge of the earth in swamp and wilderness, ruled by feeble-minded monarchs wielding divine power. Yet, in the midst of the old Byzantine order, a fresh new Russia — clumsy, anarchic and powerful — was beginning to stir.

With Russia's entry into the war in 1914, huge arms-related enterprises sprang up, vast fortunes appeared from thin air, along with banks, music halls and brothels. By the end of the year, agriculture, transport and the economy were in ruins and the Tsarist army had collapsed. As the imperial régime slipped into chaos, peasants rioted, workers struck and Russia became the plaything of the 'holy man' Rasputin, an illiterate peasant with staring eyes.

In October 1917, Petrograd was the centre of a revolution whose scope and vitality make it the greatest formative event of the century. *Storming the Heavens* is a compilation of articles by those — mainly in Petrograd — who lived through the momentous upheavals of that year. Most of the works selected here are well known, and all are from already existing translations (translators' names are omitted), but they are well selected and introduced by the editor with a lively account of the birth of the soviets, the last days of the Tsars, the creative surge of the revolution and the death agony of the Provisional Government.

Tsar Nicholas, Empress Alexandra and Malayantovich, Kerensky's Minister of Justice, sleepwalk like ghosts through the last days of the old régime. After them it's the raw energy of those whose pulses beat with the revolution. Trotsky, in exile in New York as America prepares to enter the war, describes the mass meetings, 'extraordinary for their size and enthusiasm', which greeted Russia's February Revolution. Sympathetic foreign observers, like the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent Morgan Philips Price, describe the clash between Lenin and Kerensky that June at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Nikolai Podvoisky, president of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, recalls the seething Smolny, headquarters of the revolution, as the Bolsheviks prepare for the armed rising. And Lenin, hiding in a hut on the gulf of Finland, writes *States and Revolution*, his optimistic vision of a society in which the coercive functions of the bourgeois state are destroyed and its administration is performed by ordinary workers. (The work was never finished: it was interrupted by the revolution.) And the American journalist Albert Rhys Williams describes the October skirmishes for Petrograd between the Reds and the Whites.

Within a month, the Bolsheviks had introduced the eight-hour day, abolished ranks and estates, democratised the courts and the army, nationalised the banks and declared war on the old patriarchal family. Alexandra Kollontai, in a series of articles written in 1918 and 1919, attempts a synthesis between the dilemmas facing women in the revolutionary movement since its origins in the 1860s — the choice between working to free themselves or sacrificing their own interests in the general struggle. Campaigning for women's rights, she appeals directly to women themselves to make their own demands of the revolution, and celebrates the 'new Soviet woman' of the revolution.

Larissa Reisner was one of these 'new women'. Sailing on the great warships of the Red Navy from Kazan to the Caspian, she fought as a commissar on the front line of the Civil War and celebrates the horror and heroism of those years in her book *The Front*.

As the Bolsheviks struggled to bring forth a new society while wrestling with hunger, sabotage and the invading armies of the west, the veteran German socialist and women's organiser Klara Zetkin writes in Leipzig of October's global significance; while Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's *ABC of Communism*, written in the summer of 1919 at the height of the civil war, provides a key to Bolshevik policies and achievements in the early days of Soviet power.

Two years after the revolution, the Bolsheviks were still fighting for their life. By 1920, the civil war was over. Kolchak, Yudenich and Denikin, supported by the armies of 14 countries, had come in waves to Moscow and Petrograd and all were smashed. These writings, published on the 70th anniversary of the revolution, help us to understand why. □

TRAVEL

With the lens cap on

Martin Chalmers

Zoo Station: Adventures in East and West Berlin
IAN WALKER *Secker* £12.95

BERLIN IS, AS WELL as all the other things, one of the great European literary cities. French writers and journalists, when they report on Berlin, are able to draw on the representations of the city in Hoffmann, Döblin or Benn, and filter through them the present shape of the city. English journalists, by comparison, arrive with a much more impoverished view, dominated by the monstrously over-valued Isherwood stories plus a dash of Le Carré. They deploy a depressingly limited repertoire of phrases about decadence, the war and the Wall.

This was especially evident in the reports of the journalists flown over to the city during its 750th anniversary celebrations. The occasion may well have been a piece of PR fakery, but few of these reporters seem to have made any effort to do research and even fewer to have thought of doing anything so obvious as go for a walk (otherwise we would have been spared the repeated observations

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that there are very few old buildings in Berlin).

If nothing else, Ian Walker, a journalist well known for his contributions to *New Society* and the *Observer*, is innocent of not having walked or cycled the streets of the city. In *Zoo Station* he presents a series of conversations, stories told to him in East and West, relatively straightforward journalistic set-pieces on discos, the British and American forces in West Berlin and fragments of autobiography, all loosely linked by voyages across the Wall and nights spent drinking and dancing.

Some of his material is far from uninteresting: the story of a writer who spent 18 months in a Romanian jail after a failed attempt to escape to the West (20 to a cell, two to a bed, chief means of forgetting: alcoholic dandruff remover); the claustrophobia of the British officers' club in West Berlin; the English Communist emigrés in East Berlin. And the odd intensity of travel within the city's enclosed space is very well conveyed. Journeys back and forward across (or under) the Wall sometimes have the quality of trips in a time-machine, where decades are compressed into minutes.

Returning from May Day in Berlin, Walker writes: 'I took the underground train back to Kreuzberg [in the West], a fifteen minute journey across thirty years of youth culture, from the gang show innocence of the Guantanamera singers to the electric hatred of the Mauersound, from blue shirts [of the Communist youth organisation] to black shirts.' Walker is also fascinated by the lives of East German exiles in West Berlin, 'many of whom had never been to West Germany, though they had all been to London and Paris'. Berlin is peculiarly both at the heart of Germany and Europe and detached from it.

Walker would probably have written a better and more interesting book if he had explored some of these aspects of the city further. Unfortunately, for too much of the time his gaze remains framed within the conventions of low-life portrayals and the search for the significantly eccentric. The focal point of his narrative is the decrepit flat in Kreuzberg which he shares with an assortment of exiles from Germany and around the world. However, for a journalist, he is strangely unambitious.

Since the early 1980s, the government of West Berlin has been shaken by a series of financial scandals. These scandals, and their relationship to financial subsidies and housing policies, are far from irrelevant to the lives of the people he describes. It would have been interesting to draw some of the connections — between the low-life of the politicians with their criminal connections and the low-life of the squats and bars. The 750th anniversary itself was the excuse for a determined, large-scale attempt to restructure and clean up the city, a process with London parallels in Docklands and elsewhere.

Yet, even at the level of the milieux to which he largely restricts himself, Walker does not have the literary or observational skills shown by Peter Schneider, for example, in his novel *The Wall Jumper*, or by James Fenton when he was a journalist in Berlin. (Fenton's description of Berlin café life is one of the classic portrayals of contemporary bohemia.) There's too much plodding exposition and, significantly, little attention to the appearance of things, of streets, of buildings. Furthermore, the book is full of misspelt German names — Helene Weigl instead of Weigel, Juterborg instead of Jüterbog, Nostitstrasse instead of Nostitzstrasse — and errors of historical fact. (Rosa Luxemburg did *not* come to Berlin in 1914; Karl Leibknecht did *not* found the Social Democratic Party . . .). More surprisingly still, he gets the Zombies' biggest hit wrong.

Of course, if *Zoo Station* were by Hunter S. Thompson no one would care if some names were misspelt and, no doubt, a faint memory/shadow of *Fear and Loathing* lingers somewhere in Walker's head or heart. However, the book's gravest error is that, half way through, its author tries to shift it towards a more complex kind of autobiographical writing, attempting to link the malaise affecting the world and Berlin to the malaise affecting himself. But his malaise is nothing more (or less) than the break-down of his relationship with a barely described Laura from London. First of all, his handling of the affair is sloppy and uninteresting; second, the structure and style of the *Zoo Station* can't take it. It may be a tragedy to Walker (he flees the simulations of Berlin for the realities of Managua). To anyone else it's an irrelevance and pads out a text which is already too long. □

BIOGRAPHY

Bliss it wasn't

Sara Maitland

Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life
CLARE TOMALIN *Viking* £14.95

EARLY IN MY adolescence, one of my important grown-ups introduced me to Katherine Mansfield, the writer and the myth. She was certainly the first quasi-modernist writer I read (that odd mixture of detachment and whimsy) and probably my first introduction to the short story as serious writing.

Picnicking

Peter Norman

We went back a long way:
you freckled with country bliss
and I lugging my bottle of champagne.

We talked of moving homes
and your children, and mine,
and different species of ladybirds.

We never found the dropped sunglasses
though we retraced every muddy step
down that green tunnel buzzing with spring.

But I uncovered something else:
a fog-bound campus with looming trees,
unsettling kisses, a long-forgotten choice.

Lagging behind your oblivious back
I swished a husk of hogweed stalk,
laying the ghost of what might have been.

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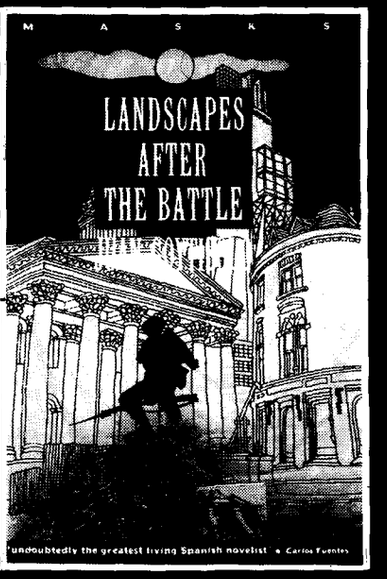

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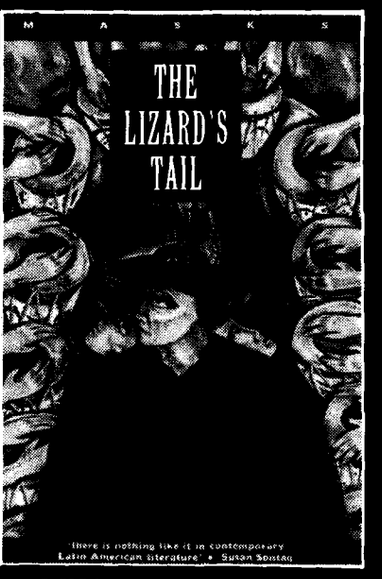

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Obviously, these things were not unimportant to me, but just as important was my introduction to a prototypical woman artist: lots of free love, lots of pained suffering (the latter with both her consumption and her husband — which, spelled out, as with Virginia Woolf, meant not only *his* personality but her 'difficult' sexuality), lots of wit and glamour covering the suffering, lots of good friends and not much work — although, alackaday, that was what mattered most to her soul (drum roll).

So what does Clare Tomalin add to, or subtract from, this picture? Because this is an already contexted biography — for me, for others and, I suspect, for the biographer, who has constructed her own literary justification out of the gaps in previous biographers' efforts — she doesn't have the free-play space she might like. Well, I do not want to say that what is offered here is negligible. Tomalin establishes not just that Mansfield had gonorrhoea, from pretty soon after her escape from her Australian family (and the author is touchingly convincing in her medical explanation of what this meant in the pre-sulphonamide days), but that she knew that she had it and that it effected her self-esteem profoundly. It introduced powerful elements of guilt and sexual confusion, as well as setting the scene for a denial and self-deceit about illness which was to prove fatal when she developed TB.

Tomalin also establishes that Mansfield had a closer and, in literary terms, far more important connection with D.H. Lawrence than we had thought (and it is moving to find a biographer who can be just to both these mythic literary figures at the same time — who both, incidentally, had TB and monumental egos, who both wanted desperately, as a matter of personal identity, to believe in free-love, and yet who produced such totally different writing).

Finally Tomalin establishes that Mansfield was, in the last count, a 'secretive creature to my last bones' and, to protect her inner self, early became a flagrant and competent liar — which makes final judgment on her life and work extremely hard to come to.

But, although Tomalin has adduced considerable new evidence about the ins and outs of Mansfield's life, there is nothing here that will radically change the picture of Mansfield carried in people's minds from the previous biographies. Indeed, it quickly becomes clear that Tomalin does not *want* to explode the myth; she wants, instead, to up-date it. The old myth of the 'suffering artist' is now united with the newer myth of the 'suffering woman': the tragedy of the woman of talent who destroys herself by being unable to cope with her own brilliance, who is torn between work and sexuality and damaged only by her own acts and ambitions — the literary version of Robyn Archer and Diana Simmonds' *A Star is Torn*.

Given Mansfield's early death (undeniably hastened, at the very least, by her own refusal to face facts and treat herself), her limited and uneven output of short stories (some of which are so good as to lead Virginia Woolf to regard Mansfield as her only contemporary rival, and some of which are frankly embarrassing even to her biographer) and the close parallels between her life and those of other women contemporaries (Virginia Woolf, Stella Benson), there is some credibility in seeing her in this way. But there are also problems.

The most pressing problem is the tawdriness of Mansfield's life, which Tomalin cannot disguise — a mass of deceits, self-dramatisations, sordid and exploitative relationships — a situation complicated by the fact that, although Tomalin frequently declares Mansfield's 'lesbianism', she seems oddly unwilling to explore either its form or its meaning in any sort of depth. Tomalin argues that Mansfield 'needed time, freedom and tolerable living conditions in which to work; the pity was that she never found all at once. Had she done so it is not unreasonable to think she could have grown into a major writer'. But this overlooks the fact that Mansfield never did anything sensible to provide herself with any of these; indeed, slipped away from them whenever they were offered. It also overlooks the fact that these 'needs' are common to every single human being — not just to the rare artistic 'genius'.

A wider context of the political and economic conditions of women would have added depth to Tomalin's thesis as well as helping to demystify the individual woman — who has been, in this biography, released from her husband's hagiographic wrapping paper only to be repackaged in Tomalin's 1980s mythological theme. □

Apartheid's Rebels
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STEPHEN M. DAVIS

This book is the first to break South Africa's censorship barrier and reveal the growing strength of the African National Congress - apartheid's guerrilla rebels. Filled with crucial new information about such issues as the involvement of communists in the ANC, the ANC's military strategy, and the weakness of the South African government forces in battling resistance, this is an indispensable guide to what Pretoria does not want the West - or its own people - to know.

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SEXUAL POLITICS

Silent majority

Gregory Woods

Heterosexuality
ed. GILLIAN E. HANSCOMBE & MARTIN HUMPHRIES *GMP* £4.95

HETEROGENITAL intercourse is *taught*; in biology lessons, in sex lessons, in question-and-answer textbooks. All of these syllabi revolve round one central sentence: 'The penis enters the vagina'. When I first read it it conjured up an image of two chunks of meat jerking about in a bowl until their purpose was served. It still does. No amount of accusations of perversion from the hetero camp can erase this fetishised image of normative intercourse.

Heterosexuality is the love that need not speak its name. Only homosexuals are ever likely to refer to it by its full one; the complacent hetero thinks of it as *sexuality* entire. Who but the homosexual ever thinks to mention that Torquemada, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Jack the Ripper were heterosexual? (This is an argument I found recently in the semi-pornographic Italian gay magazine *Doppio Senso*.) Whoever mentions that the vast majority of child molesters and rapists are heterosexual, or that the pornography that most damages women is heterosexual porn, or that the majority of murders are motivated by convulsions within the heterosexual social framework? Those of us to whom heterosexuals are 'they' clearly see a different world.

So, a book on heterosexuality by homosexuals: the logic is paradoxical but perfectly sound. After all, the existence of homosexuality *defines* its obsessive oppressor. Not surprisingly, the only entry for heterosexuality in the British Library's subject catalogue says: 'Heterosexuals: marriage to homosexuals'. In any case, since I can think of no heterosexual in human history who could be objective about heterosexuality, this book's innovatory use of homosexuals as detached observers would seem to be salutory — even if, in the event, they turn out to be only semi-detached. Perhaps this policy should be adopted in all areas where the autism of the heterosexual hegemony blocks out its alternatives.

Heterosexuality is a concept as bogus but compelling as the elusive 'centre ground' of politics. Logic tells us that, if homosexuality is marginal and extreme, heterosexuality is *ipso facto* the same: marginal or, as Margaret Mead said, a perversion. But simply to turn the tables in this way, asserting the strangeness and obscenity of the 'majority', does not take us far. The sections of this book which self-consciously assume the normalcy of being gay and deduce from it the kinkiness of being straight rarely rise above mere whimsy. This simple reversal was milked for what little it was worth by Anthony Burgess in 1962, in a novel called *The Wanting Seed*.

As a general rule, the women's contributions to *Heterosexuality* are a little more telling than the men's; and the serious contributions far more so

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than the humorous. The contents include a dialogue, a diagram, a science fiction allegory, a prison journal, illustrations and so on. This variety begins usefully to reflect the number of areas in which even the most separatist homosexual — female or male, but female in particular — has to put up with the straight world and its irrelevant demands. But the variety of contributions also weakens the book's focus.

It would be easy to give the whole collection a witheringly bad review. I almost did. I could pick on the pretensions of some passages, the whimsicality of others, the apparent irrelevance of others. I could say, for the first time in my career, that there is a little too much about *homo*sexuality here. Many of the arguments are directionless; the political drift is listless and confused. What is lacking is any real sense of rage or outrage. Aiming these pieces at the impregnable Institution of Heterosex is a little like goading a dragon with snowflakes.

And yet, the extent to which the book *fails* is itself an eloquent witness to the discomfort its subject causes. It took some years to compile, and its publication date was delayed several times. It seems not to have been easy to write, and it makes uncomfortable reading — to a fellow homosexual, at least. Almost every page adds to a coherent impression of sheer pain. These are the fearful (in both senses) cries of a subject people. Perhaps to heterosexuals it will be as funny and sexy and incomprehensible as the powerless so often are to the powerful.

Finally, I think a separate word of praise is due to the last item in the book, Jon Ward's magisterial essay on 'The Nature of Heterosexuality', which pithily and elegantly pulverises the arguments by which heterosexuals lay false claim to the monopoly of natural behaviour. Having read this, I look forward to seeing the book-length essay, *Unspeakable Desire*, that Ward is just completing for GMP. □

Gregory Woods is the author of Articulate Flesh: Male Homo-eroticism and Modern Poetry, *published by Yale and soon to be reviewed in these pages.*

FOOTBALL

From the terrace

Steve Pinder

IN THE BEGINNING (1972, to be precise) was the word — and the word was *Foul*. On football terraces throughout the country, fans could be seen at half-time eschewing the delights of the official programme for this badly typed, poorly laid out and cheaply printed magazine.

It was what it *contained* that was crucial. For the first time, the blandness and cynicism of the football magazines and the nationals were stripped away. Serious investigations into football clubs' finances sat side by side with wickedly accurate parodies of Fleet Street's finest. A two-page feature which wouldn't have disgraced the *Sunday Times* Insight team — on the Ibrox disaster of 1971, for example, and the subsequent legal wranglings — would be followed by the 'Foul of the Month Awards', given to the dirtiest player around.

It was the brainchild of two Cambridge undergraduates, Alan Stewart and Steve Tongue, who were later to be joined by Andrew Nickold, Stan Hey, Peter Ball, Geoff McDonald and cartoonist Kevin Macey. As they said in the first issue, *Foul* was launched on a 'mountain of disgust'. Arsenal had just won the double in the most boring fashion imaginable; England had been humiliated by West Germany in the European Nations Cup; and Leeds, under Don Revie, was dominating football with a joyless, sterile game.

Foul blossomed in 1973 and, for three years, enjoyed a golden period. Revie was by now England manager and his dour tactics and side were regularly criticised in the magazine. Norman Hunter, a player whose name was synonymous with 'dirty', won the first Professional Footballers Association Footballer of the Year Award. And a Polish goalkeeper whom Brian Clough had described as 'a clown' kept England out of the World Cup finals. In such an atmosphere, there was much to cover.

If the magazine was a hit with its readers, however, it wasn't with advertisers. Its debts were initially underwritten by Jonathan and Tim Rice but, by the end of the 1974/5 season, the drain was too much and they pulled out (in fact *Foul* can probably claim to be the only venture on which Tim Rice has ever lost money). In October 1976, the 34th and final issue appeared.

Nothing in football had changed because of its existence, but since some of those who wrote for and read *Foul* were later to work in the 'serious' media, some of the ways in which football is now covered can perhaps be attributed to it. In any case, its name passed into legend, used as a byword for a particular style of football journalism fostered by some of the 'alternative' magazines. Then, at the end of the 1985 season, came the horrors of Bradford, Birmingham, Brussels, and ordinary, sane, non-violent fans began discussing their beloved game in a wider cultural and sociological context. Coupled with the realisation that big business was getting into clubs for more reasons than a couple of free seats, a swell of opinion began to gather to the effect that it was time that the game was returned to those who own it and pay for it — the fans.

Ten years after the death of *Foul*, three new magazines much in its mould suddenly appeared: *When Saturday Comes*, *Off The Ball* and *The Absolute Game* (the last concentrating on Scottish football). As *WSC* said in its first issue 'What [we] might be a bit more like is the sort of thing you talk about in the pub. Gossip, stories, arguments, some serious things that never get discussed anywhere else, like racism at football.' *OTB* echoed: 'We won't be treated like idiots any more. We, being "ordinary" supporters of mainly ordinary clubs, are sick of being portrayed as morons in the press, tired of being patronised by television's lifeless coverage of a great sport and most of all, angry at being manipulated by tyrannical directors and administrators who, in their eagerness to "modernise" our game, show all the rationality of headless chickens.'

Since their launches, all three have gone from strength to strength, with improved printing, layout and writing. And these sharks are followed by a shoal of smaller magazines, based around a single club. Fans, fed up with the blandness of clubs' official publications and the kow-towing local press, have discovered that publishing is possible, cheap and fun.

Their output ranges in quality from Bradford's *City Gent*, which carries advertising and is accepted by the club as a useful, independent channel of communication to the fans, to *A Kick Up the Rs*, Queens Park Rangers' magazine, that arose from the proposed merger with Fulham where fans had no forum to fight the plans. To be honest, few would win prizes for either prose or design, but their earthy humour and sincere love for the game and the club more than balance that.

Like *Foul*, they have little influence as yet on the clubs, the players, the media or the game's administrators, but they are a forum for like-minded fans to discuss ideas and voice concerns. And, when groups of people start doing that, they discover a collective strength that *can* change things. Football in this country is still in a parlous state but those who care for it now have a voice. The traditions of *Foul* live on to such a degree that *The Best of Foul*, edited by Mike Ticher of *WSC* (Sportspages, £5.95), is shortly appearing.

One of Fleet Street's finest once said of *Foul*'s contributors: 'Small men with smaller talents crawling out of scruffy holes.' Well, Brian Glanville, they're back — in numbers — and the irony is that they are more relevant to football than your increasingly irrelevant match reports in the *Sunday Times*. □

For a list of magazines, send an sae to Football Mags, c/o the New Statesman.

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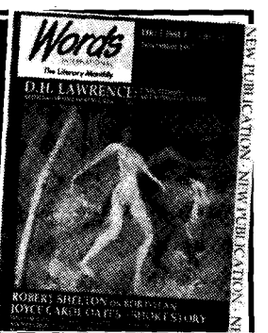

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Selbourne taken to task

Bill Prendeville, London N15
David Selbourne (*NS* 16 Oct) calls for 'openness' of mind on the British left; a call long made in parts of that left, and now finding greater resonance. David Blunkett never has been a voice in the wilderness. Yet we also need clarity of mind, something Selbourne's lengthy piece lacks.

Many are not only familiar with the sort of criticisms he makes of both ultra-left and reformist positions, but have also voiced similar concerns in some areas; on the effects of a paternalist statism; the absence of democracy in trade unions (albeit too late); and the importance of personal relationships in people's consciousness. I will gladly provide him with full references, but he can start by perusing copies of *Chartist* for the last few years.

Yet he seems in a quandary. Toryism is 'historically progressive', and has rearticulated 'a libertarian politics of working-class and community self-reliance'. But dear Mr Selbourne would like Labour to benefit from these popular policies. Is he just being kind? And — if not, are the Tories doing something wrong?

We look in vain for an answer, but find instead an important gap. He really doesn't tell us how his 'individual' would be better off in any concrete way (except in education, where he is wrong). Would the individual currently disadvantaged in terms of power — for instance, a woman, — gain more control over her life? Or would 'kinship' as well as welfarism, possibly restrict her choices.

It is these issues of power and control, as expressed in ideas for extending democracy and universal rights, which will be central for the prospects of a democratic socialist strategy. Whether Selbourne does have a role in the rethinking of the British left will rather depend on what he has to say on such matters.

Eric Stockton, Orkney
I do not see why David Selbourne expects socialists (or anyone else except contemporary Tories, for that matter) to work for 'abandonment of the principle of universal entitlement to public provision regardless of need'.

If a progressive tax system inadvertently taxes the rich too much (a theoretical possibility) it would be only fair to let the victims of such injustice get some of it back. If taxation bears fairly on such people, then their old age entitlement would be clawed back. If they are taxed too lightly — this is easily remedied. The alternative to universal entitlement is targeting (means test, to you). This is cumbersome, because it must necessarily entail complicated rules, officials to administer those rules and appeals machinery.

Why have bureaucracy and potential injustice when a sensible tax system and an adequate Tax Inspectorate, can render simple entitlement socially and individually just?

B. A. Miller, Ilford, Essex
David Selbourne shows an amazing naivety. Either he is deliberately misinterpreting concepts in an attempt to mislead the reader, or is genuinely unable to understand the complexities of socialist definitions. For instance he refers to labour as every man's property (attributed to Cobbett), proceeds to totally misinterpret the concept and suggests it has been discarded by socialists and ' co-opted and rearticulated by the Toryism which is now in power'. This is unbelievable nonsense and I am surprised that the *New Statesman* does not require more integrity (if the misinterpretations are deliberate), or more knowledgeable argument if ignorance is the cause.

The repeated use of quotations, totally out of context, leaves the reader in considerable doubt regarding the reliability let alone the validity of the argument.

Selbourne took three pages to say little more than that the Soviets are moving to the right, the Czechoslovaks have a grammer (*sic*) school system, China is becoming more democratised, Bulgaria has seven competing banks, Poland allows shares in private companies, and so on. From this Selbourne goes on to suggest that the existing problems within education, health care, housing and unemployment in Britain are attributable to out-of-date Labour policies. In fact everything that has led to the present divide in British society is blamed on socialism, with no recognition given to the fact that there is, and has been for some time, a Tory government in power with homelessness, unemployment, shortages of teachers and nurses escalating alarmingly.

Having read and re-read this article several times I can now appreciate the exasperation of an examiner trying to elicit some indication of constructive thought processes when marking a paper filled with disjointed snippets of information which appear designed to camouflage a lack of sound theoretical and empirical knowledge.

Debating with Lubbock

Patrick Wright, London E8
Strange things happen to Crusades that are launched from Hampstead, and Jules Lubbock's piece of bluster suggests that he is running true to traditions which are less than purely architectural. The Labour Party is run by 'political hacks' who are blind to the 'greatest moral and political issue of the day', while the left's 'intellectuals' are busy poisoning the wells from which renewal must come. I have been included in Mr Lubbock's gallery of mental defectives since the summer. Back in May, when he wrote a piece on the classical revival in architecture, Mr Lubbock was content with low-grade innuendo of the kind that could be disowned and attributed to sub-editors on the phone. Last week, however, he dressed himself up as a brave Crusader and repeated the accusation quite explicitly. Together with that other upstart Robert Hewison, I am found guilty of 'lofty detachment', a 'benumbing intellectual ambivalence about our heritage', contempt for people's interest in history ('nostalgia, as they call it') and a preoccupation — both inhumane and dogmatic — with finding 'the proper left analysis'.

Readers may not be entirely surprised to hear that I take a rather different view of my own endeavours. When I started looking into these questions of the national heritage in 1979, I was concerned with two related issues. The past was evidently becoming a preoccupation at many different levels of the national culture. Far from being dismissive of this development, I tried to describe it as a decent and rational response to the upheavals of postwar history and to the threat which these posed to a whole variety of traditions, architectural ones included. If I have expressed impatience with the idea of 'nostalgia,' this is because I find the term quite inadequate to the range of experience that I wanted to understand.

At the same time as trying to provide a respectful account of this concern for tradition, I was also interested in another set of developments which Jules Lubbock has apparently yet to grasp. While a contemporary sense of the past has been on the rise in recent years, it has also been conscripted to causes which the left, above all, should be concerned to understand.

Preservationism has strong architectural connections, but it has also derived its image of the nation in opposition to the leading developments of the welfare state era. As the National Trust's architectural advisers pointed out before either Hewison or myself, Attlee promised a progressive future in 1945 but Evelyn Waugh had already launched a powerful image of the endangered traditional past in the Brideshead of 1944. The opposition between these two conceptions of the nation has been proliferating ever since.

We can see this opposition, if we only bother to look, in the post-war redefinition of National Trust. After forty years of work focussed mainly on land and public access, the Trust becomes concerned with large country houses and is led by its art historians into promoting an ancestralised aesthetic which sets private

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aristocratic meaning off, against the values of public architects like Quinlan Terry, built as it is on a fundamental and precise rejection of the whole reforming project of the post-war years.

We can see it in post-war campaigns over 'Defence lands' and their release from military ownership: between Crichel Down in the early fifties and Tyneham in the sixties, the army changes from being the usurper of the national landscape and becomes the patriotic force which has saved 'our heritage' from planners, bureaucrats, developers and immigrants. We can see it, despite Jules Lubbock, in the campaign over the old telephone box where widespread concern about a threatened public service was turned, largely by the *The Spectator*, into a victory for the privatisation lobby. As for the part played by preservationism in the gentrification of old inner city areas, this was first described by Sharon Zukin in *Loft-Living*, her splendid account of the Manhattan loft scene. Preservationism rediscovers 'our heritage' in the old immigrant quarters, and in doing so it paves the way for exactly the kind of redevelopment that displaces traditional urban populations. Everything that has recently happened in Spitalfields proves the same point. Lubbock might turn for a moment from Coin Street (about which we can all agree), and reconsider his own support — guarded as it was — for the redevelopment of Spitalfields Market (*NS* 31 July).

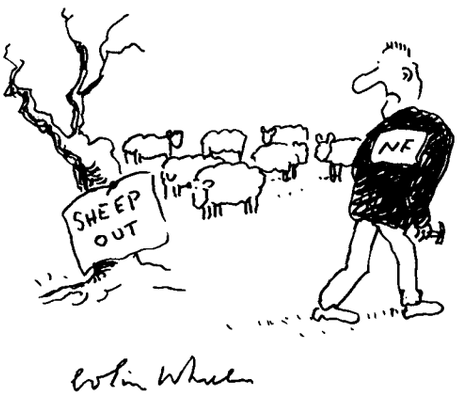
This is the fundamental challenge that Lubbock refuses to take up. There can be no straightforward appeal to 'our heritage' until these problems have been properly faced. Lubbock blames people like me for the fact that the right seems to have a monopoly on 'heritage' matters. Where there is heritage there are often also traitors — advocates of progressive taxation, the marxist planners who, according to Gavin Stamp, were responsible for the towerblocks, socialist 'intellectuals' or, far worse, racial 'aliens' — and this is not the first time that I've found myself listed in this company of demons. Lubbock makes a mediocre Spycatcher, and it would be more worthy of him — he is, after all, architectural correspondent for the *New Statesman* — to consider how this scandalous monopoly has come about and to put his mind to the more serious business of overcoming it. It is ridiculous to be huffing and puffing about 'the greatest political crusade of the coming century' when you can't even recognise the practical challenges of your own time.

Lest we forget

Gautam Sen, Dept of International Relations, LSE, London WC2.

Since you have been cheerily airing the pros (mainly) and cons of repatriating me I wonder if you can do me the courtesy of allowing a comment on my possible fate. The unstated assumption that non-whites are the problem ought really to to be made explicit so that we are under no illusions about the new realism on the left. One could of course be perverse and argue that the problem is white racism in the main and if four per cent of the population is to be *persuaded* to depart, maybe it would be more just to transport the virulent racists (surely, less than four per cent of the population?); perhaps to the Falklands, so that they can indulge their xenophobia to the full in the one British territory where it would be functional and official approval unashamed.

The other outcome which needs to be acknowledged more openly is the full consequences of a policy of voluntary repatriation. Such a policy is obviously intended to be merely the first official act. Its implementation would undoubtedly require the



full participation of especially patriotic Britons since few non-whites would actually depart. Every racial attack on non-whites would acquire a meaning hitherto absent since the failure of non-whites to take advantatge of this generous and sensible policy would disappoint the expectations of many. And the pained supporters of racial equality could sleep in peace because non-whites could be regarded as having a choice and quite probably the offer of a cheque to speed them on the way. I can well imagine numbers of appalled whites arguing that 'in their shoes I wouldn't wish to live in this racist country'.

Another fascinating angle to this policy which is deserving of recognition: since mass unemployment and its costs in taxation are here to stay, repatriating the black working class would make a healthy contribution to reducing the public sector borrowing requirement in the medium-term; the 20p tax would then arrive. As for the governments of the country for which non-whites would be expected to depart, few would protest at any of the goings on here. The majority of the non-whites involved belong to segments of society for which heart-felt concern has not been the most salient characteristic of the respective ruling classes; indeed the prospect of a hefty addition to the balance of payments from increased aid and any asset the happy returnees (we should ignore the reality that the vast majority are British-born) are *allowed* to take with them would result in rejoicing in various corridors of power.

Finally, the apparent logic and clarity of argument of reactionaries like Alfred Sherman ought to be swallowed in small doses by the assorted defenders of free speech. The boundaries of free speech are arbitrary. When you allow your columns to be used to discuss repatriation, or for that matter the NF's right to advice from the NCCL all you are saying is that these issues are part of the legitimate discourse of British society. A party advocating the mugging of old ladies (white of course), which successfully influenced segments of the population is extremely unlikely to be permitted the privilege of respectable debate being accorded to the fate of entire communities. That is of course the first important step towards making the unthinkable into policy. The Nazis did indeed begin with small uncertain steps.

Insulting to my humanity

Alison Davis, Blandford Forum, Dorset

Sarah Spencer's article on the desirability of introducing abortion legislation into Northern Ireland fails to take adequate note of the experience of such legislation in Britain (*NS 16 Oct.*) I think it is important to consider what legalised abortion has actually led to in Britain in the light of the 'benefits' it was supposed to bring.

Some people thought every child would be a wanted child after the Act, but in fact the rates of septic abortion, and of child abuse went up. Some thought it would liberate women, but it led to their 'choice' being increasingly controlled by their oppressors, and some thought it would save handicapped children a life of misery. Speaking as a woman with a disability (I am confined to a wheelchair due to spina bifida) I find this attitude and that of Sarah Spencer, when she speaks of the need for abortion in the Province because the rates of spina bifida are so high, insulting to my humanity. It is rather like affluent whites complaining that the numbers of blacks are too high in a particular area, and must therefore by reduced by whatever means are available. The handicapped are no less a minority group, whose rights urgently need

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protecting.

I believe abortion is wrong, both intrinsically, and because of the effects it has had on society. It is wrong of itself because it involves the killing of a human being. Every society views that as wrong when it is done to older people, and no one has yet put forward satisfactory arguments about why this general rule should be overlooked just because the victim is young and vulnerable.

In the case of disability, the atmosphere of 'solving' problems by killing which was engendered by the Abortion Act has had consequences more far-reaching than anyone could have envisaged in 1967. It has led firstly, to the destruction of many thousands of unborn handicapped children, most of whom could have lived happy lives, and all of whom had the right to live out their natural life span unmolested. It has led inexorably to the sedation and starvation of those who failed to be detected in time to be killed by abortion. It has led to growing pressure for euthanasia of those 'incapable of dissent' as well as on a voluntary basis. It has led to mentally handicapped women being sterilised and given abortions without their consent. It has led to experiments on human embryos being justified on the grounds that they might 'prevent handicap' (though there is no evidence that they actually would). It has led to 'selective feticide' (euphemistically called 'reduction of pregnancy') where the heart of one baby in a multiple pregnancy is pierced so that it bleeds to death while the others are left alive. It has also led to 'wrongful life' claims (as yet unsuccessful) in courts, where adults sue doctors on behalf of children they claim should never have been allowed to be born.

Far from liberating anyone, abortion has led to a view that life is precious only when 'perfect' and that all 'unwanted' life is dispensible. It has also fostered the entirely indefensible claim that it is legitimate to fight for one's own rights at the expense of denying someone else's very right to exist. Rights only have any meaning if they are universal and inviolable — it is totally illogical for women to fight against their own oppression by in turn becoming oppressors of a still more vulnerable group, the unborn. Abortion on demand and the claiming of liberation just for one group of people at another's expense, far from being a 'right' is an ethic which is anti-feminist, unfair, inhumane and ultimately bound to fail.

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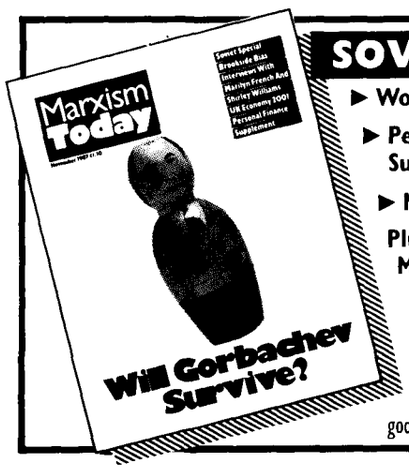

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SETTING THE GREEN AGENDA
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"How Green Is Our Future — Last Chances as Best Chances?"
St James's Church, Piccadilly 01-734 4511 at 1.05pm.

WED 4 NOV

JONATHON PORRITT on "Green Hopes, Green Fears". United Reformed Church, Tetherdown, Muswell Hill N10. 8.00pm. Free.

FORTHCOMING

SAT 14 NOV

THE THATCHER YEARS: BRITAIN AND LATIN AMERICA. Latin America Bureau Conference, 11.00-5.30, LSE. Details 278 2829.

STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE on Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome. Nov 13, 14, 15. Details 01-836 1973 Africa Centre, 38 King Street, WC2

SAT 14 NOV

"SOCIALISM AND THE DRUG INDUSTRY."
Conference; 10.30 — in Mary Ward Hall, 5-7 Tavistock Place, London Wc1. Speakers: **Jo Collier, Jerry Shulman, Alison MacFarlane.** Tickets/Information: Socialist Health Association, 195 Walworth Road, London SE17. 01-703 6838.

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BACKCHAT

OUT TO LUNCH

Storm damage

Andrew Lumsden

I WRITE it *sotto voce*, begging that you won't mention it to a living soul, but my flat's under offer. If nothing goes awry, if nothing goes *too* awry, it does rather seem as if my fairly continuous residential acquaintance with London will be coming to an end round about Christmas.

If I can compare little with large, I do feel a bit like one of those street trees uprooted by the hurricane in the small hours of the 16th, flat on its back with its roots in the air all tangled with city paving-stones. Just as some of those, or at any rate the rare-type ones at Kew and in the Chelsea Physic Garden, are to be cut into pieces and reassembled as fine furniture, so I trust I shall put myself together again elsewhere in some fine form.

Where? And in what form? I went into a travel agent's the other day to ask if it's possible to go by boat to Australia. Tears of laughter streaming down their faces they explained that no one has gone by boat to Australia since the convicts. Pulling themselves together, they discovered that a luxury liner leaves Bremerhaven or somewhere like that every month or two, and I could take that to Sidney for a mere £95,000 or so (one way). It takes six weeks.

Six weeks, six weeks at sea . . . just imagine. My paternal grandfather, as a cub reporter in the 1890s, was once summoned into his editor's office, given some ten golden sovereigns and told to go at once to Constantinople to cover a story. As a teenager he'd sailed before the mast (what on *earth* does that mean?) on the *Cutty Sark* to the Sub-Continent and back, trading in tea.

How people did get around, before travel was made easy and therefore impossible. I'd decided, you see, to regard myself as a political convalescent (yes, I know, who isn't?) and prescribe myself, out of my leaving-London kitty, a sea-voyage to Australia and then another across the Pacific to California, where English people go to be reminded what it's like to be a citizen.

Denis Lemon convalesced in America in 1977 after 12 British subjects convicted him at the Old Bailey of publishing a blasphemous libel, when he was editor of *Gay News*. I remember Mary Whitehouse telling a press conference how she'd fallen to her knees and given thanks to God. Technically, she should have given thanks for the absence of a First Amendment.

The Yanks summoned Denis and put him by a swimming pool for two or three weeks. There's something about being on or by water after any exposure to British backwardness . . . which accounts, I suppose, for the water-spouts and hurricanoes which an over-enthusiastic Providence has visited on us all since 11 June. Typical of Jehovah to overdo it, his usual practice since the Pharaohs.

I daresay in January or thereabouts I shall submit to progress and take the plane to San Francisco. Woodward is stoically ready to receive me for a six-month stay, the stoicism consisting in the fact that I shall undoubtedly prose on about the American elections, which will already have bored and shamed the natives rigid. And I may write a play. I've been considering the curious incident in Naples on 30 December 1897 when the British consul warned the holidaying ex-PM Lord Rosebery that the ex-con Oscar Wilde was in town. Nobody in the 'serious' press pays the slightest attention to the fact that Wilde was ultimately destroyed to hush up the 1895 Liberal Prime Minister's gay affair (*vide* every review I saw of the Ellmann biography in recent weeks, none of which mentioned it). Well, I think it would make a cracking play. At least it could be one production with lovely bay-of-Naples sets.

Or a musical? Very Sondheim. I knew that Rosebery, hereditary Scots aristo, married one of the Rothschild gels, Hannah, in the 1870s (hence Mentmore, sold a few years ago), but didn't till the other day know that Archibald Rosebery used to counter Victorian upper-class anti-semitism with the crushing rejoinder 'I'm Jewish myself', allying himself with his wife. The man really begins to interest me. Pity about the sea journey, which I should think would be ideal for growing a beard and becoming Bernard Shaw. □

'My dear, I had a nervous breakdown wearing a dress exactly like that . . .'

FIRST PERSON

V signs

Geoff Dyer

'*WHAT IS IT that these crude words are revealing*' (From *V* by Tony Harrison).

A friend of mine who teaches literature routinely explains to his pupils why it is worth their while to attend his classes. 'When you leave here,' he says, 'two sentences of decent English will get you out of a lot of heavy situations.' In the current educational climate a more lavish justification of the humanities is, he feels, inappropriate.

As far as certain Tory MPs and the tabloid press are concerned, however, there is precious little decent in the English of a poem like Tony Harrison's *V*. It's the kind of complaint that has fuelled Harrison's efforts ever since his English teacher at Leeds Grammar interrupted his reading of Keats ('mi 'art aches . . .') with a plea for a bit more Received Pronunciation. Even his dad, from whom Harrison got the accent that appalled his teacher, greeted his first collection, *The Loiners*, with the words: *'You weren't brought up to write such mucky books.'*

The latest howls have been occasioned by the televised version of *V* in which the poet visits the family grave in Leeds and finds it sprayed with obscene graffiti. The central section of the poem is a debate between the poet and the imagined skinhead culprit (*'Who needs yer fucking poufy words? Ah write mi own.'*). The programme is a kind of poetry promo, intercutting Harrison

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reading the poem in a wine bar (itself the kind of irony that is bread and butter to the poet) with footage from the graveyard and its environs.

Actually composed during the miners' strike, *V* is vintage Harrison, the title punning on versus ('class v. class') and verses. Harrison was brought up in a working-class family and then 'taken' away from that background by his education; his best poems have always addressed themselves to this, the classic anguish of the scholarship boy. One of the few English poets to have a tangible sense of history, he is a product of exactly the social convulsion that first produced the Angry Young Men. His chief achievement has been to historicise in verse an experience that has hitherto been the preserve of prose. In many ways, then, he is exactly the kind of poet the English left has always wanted.

Instead it is the right-wing press that is capitalising on him ('another probably bolshie poet', 'four letter filth', etc.). Hot on the heels of items in the media as to whether a paper like the *Star* can really be considered journalism the *Star* gets its revenge, shouting (if I can put it into Harrisonese): '*Call this fuckin' poetry?*'

Harrison has long been one of my favourite poets and the headlines in the gutter press were, for me, as depressingly mindless as were the original graffiti to Harrison. Poetry and grave were defiled by aerosol and print alike. I expect little enough from the media but, it seems, as with graffiti, there's no getting away from them. Most of the time the tabloids don't mention poetry but, as Thomas Pynchon notes somewhere (not in *V*!) we must beware of thinking of ignorance as a blank space; it has its own contours and structures, its own cohesion and logic. Since it also has a strong impulse to colonise it is no surprise that its forces should lay siege to Harrison's poem. The recent controversy is less a question of dialect versus RP than of language being suffocated by its own misuse, being forced into a space so small that it can hardly breathe.

The pressure comes not only from the guttural idiom of the tabloids but also from the sanitised clichés of respectable media-speak. Take, for example, Michael Buerk's recent look back at his time in South Africa in which an abundance of TV footage was squandered by Buerk's inability to break through the bland idiom of BBC reportage. Freed from the strictures of the news bulletin he filled up the extra space with the echoing of empty rhetoric about 'evil in the heart of man'.

Ostensibly there may be little in common between Buerk and the language of the tabloids; the important point is that, equally incapable of bearing the weight of contemporary reality, both flatten and impoverish words even as they use them. *V*, for all its flaws — the expediencies of rhyme and rhythm with which Harrison extricates himself from the tight corners of the quatrain — shows linguistic vigour and poetry fighting for their lives. The odds against them are such that it is only natural to butt, slash and gouge. □

V is broadcast on Channel 4 at 11.30pm, 4 November; the text is available in Selected Poems *(Penguin).*

FOOD

Have you booked?

Colin Spencer

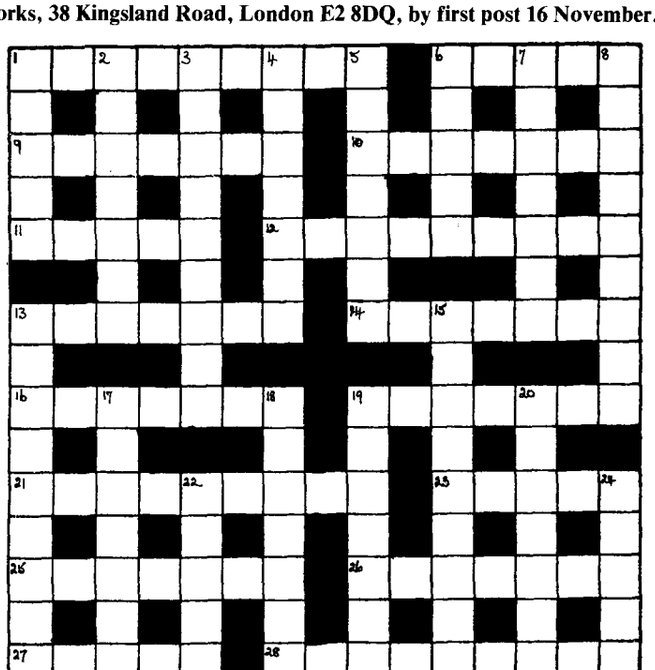
THE COOKERY BOOK boom escalates, peddling more recipes than any of us have had hot dinners, with publishers bringing out their most celebrated titles in the autumn. The following, among lively opposition, are the *crême de la crême*.

French Country Kitchen by Geraldene Holt (Penguin, £6.95) is both arresting and beguiling; we have not had a book since Elizabeth David's which so strongly evokes the smells and flavours of rural France. Wisely, Holt warns us that the book does not attempt an encyclopaedic survey of regional food; rather it is a highly personal, affectionate account of her enthusiasm for this type of French cooking. The introductions to the chapters — 'Herbs', 'Mushrooms', 'The Pig', 'The Olive' are but a few of the subjects covered — are masterly and precise, recollecting incidents like the garlic fair at Uzes, 'the stinking rose', the trout leaping out of the Loire, the thumbnail mushroom with its strong meaty flavour, the *mousseron* of the high regions of the Ardeche, the Chevaliers des Olives in Nyons (an area that makes a classic oil from the small, oval, black fruit, that has the most delicious buttery flavour). A book to linger over — and one which will induce the salivary glands to work overtime.

Just as riveting but, this time, evoking the

Weekend Crossword 1576

PRIZES: £3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1576, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 16 November.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

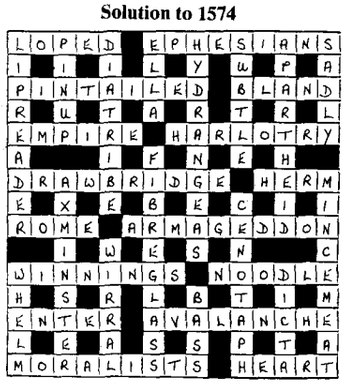
1. The bigoted keep prisoners out of sight (9)
6. Cut a man and get married (5)
9. Discovered the meaning of fish in action (7)
10. The flower to intimidate someone in the field (7)
11. Dickens character who is impolite about force (5)
12. Isle with no charge for accommodation? (9)
13. Shut out top person for making animal noise (7)
14. Use Lord freely as destination for the religious (7)
16. Get something to eat when means of cooking is put back in the road (7)
19. The leader of the left is not a blond (7)
21. No man is confused about sport or play (9)
23. Needed when fishing for river fish (5)
25. Most of the crowd join with woman in prayer (7)
26. Fish which makes a politician carry the can (7)
27. Moment when a duck includes a century (5)
28. These people join up even if one replaces the Queen (9)

DOWN

1. One who conceals the psychological entity in woman (5)
2. Remove drink for an important game? (7)
3. Pestering for something to wear with an emblem on it (9)
4. To kill in dismantling a gun brings ruin (7)
5. Church leader's vessel in port (7)
6. Cries of hot-headed birds (5)
7. Man is almost liberated although in an uncivilised environment (7)
8. Journalists go into action although unhappy (9)
13. Canopy without hair over a part of the face (9)
15. Infra dig sap? (9)
17. Old actress who almost makes final appearance (7)
18. Needs an alteration to make these groups (7)
19. Restoration which incorporates the modern in the authentic (7)
20. Recluse appears before a little one (7)
22. Name of another niece's husband (5)
24. Wise men reckon time in seconds (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1574



Prizewinners to 1574

Rodney Mayes
(Southshields, Tyne & Wear)
A. Kirkby (Exeter, Devon)
Ian McNay (Milton Keynes)

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Italian countryside and cooking, is **Italian Pizza and Savoury Breads** by Elizabeth Romer (Michael O'Mara Books, £9.95). Romer points out in her introduction that the relationship between the Italians, their food and the land has not yet been ruined by industrial revolution: a difficult concept for the urban British to grasp. She also goes on to say that the Italians enjoy, appreciate and respect good food and conserve with pride the regional differences in their cooking.

The basic pizza, she points out, is as old as Neolithic man: a flat bread cooked at the hearth on a hot stone or clay disc, which was then seasoned. Essentially it is the food of the poor worldwide and throughout history. On everything, Romer writes brilliantly, an attentive and enquiring observer of the people she watches, preparing and cooking food in ways which have not changed for hundreds of years. Hers is a definitive book on the subject, with enticing recipes. It will ensure that pizza-palace pizzas never taste as satisfying again.

Still in the land of pasta and porcini we have Anna del Conte's **Gastronomy of Italy** (Bantam, £19.95), a superb encyclopaedia, illustrated with old-master paintings, giving every Italian food term under the Mediterranean sun. Here you will find that *totano* is a flying squid, found mainly in the Ligurian Sea, which is stewed in wine and tomato sauce. And that *fagottini* is an outer casing of dough wrapped round stuffings, an Italian spring roll in fact. This book is the first of a series and del Conte is to be congratulated on a mammoth task of compilation and scholarship. If travelling through Italy, you should certainly take her book with you.

If, on the other hand, you are travelling down the Iberian peninsula, you'd be better off with **The Spanish Table** (Ebury Press, £10.95) by Marimar Torres. A natural and passionate cook, Torres distinguishes between Spain's 15 different regions. The paella from the Pais Valenciano on the coast has given Spanish cooking an undeserved name for muddled and mediocre flavours, but consider the Romesco sauce of Catalonia, a paste of roasted almonds with garlic, red peppers, bread and tomatoes, or the tapas of Andalucia, or the most expensive spice in the world, the saffron of La Mancha, or the marvellous shellfish of Galicia. Not before time has Marimar Torres brought the wealth of the real Spanish cooking to our attention.

If you are a lover of the Greek islands you could hardly resist **Greek Island Cookery** by Rena Salaman and Linda Smith (Ebury Press, £9.95). The cooking is basic and robust, with strong, gutsy flavours that are as potent as the sea and the sun. Salaman writes appealingly of her homeland and is glowingly informative on a variety of the obscure island dishes.

Turning The Tables: Recipes and Reflections from Women (Sheba, £5.50) began as a concept at the second International Feminist Bookfair last summer in Oslo. Now it has been compiled by Sue O'Sullivan and given a searching introduction, by Dena Attar, relevant to all food writers today. Attar talks of the hidden messages beneath the recipes in most cookery books, ones which on the whole do nothing for women's self-image. Among the 50 recipes are Julie Christie's London Particular Soup, Angela Carter's potato soup, Salad Niçoise from Linda Bellos and a wonderful recipe of steamed fish with ginger from The Chinese Lesbian Group. The whole book is full of fun and politics, seeing food as both sensuous and significant. Its section on 'Ambivalence', on women trapped in the kitchen, is particularly pertinent and fascinating. A must for every man's Christmas stocking.

Classic Indian Vegetarian Cooking by Julie Sahni (Jill Norman/Dorling Kindersley, £12.95) is another definitive work; more detailed than Madhur Jaffrey's, the very pages evoke the smells of turmeric and sesame, of tamarind, cardamom and ginger. Sahni is always anecdotal and fascinating, bringing to our attention a huge repertoire of Indian vegetarian dishes. There is also, incidentally, a new Madhur Jaffrey, **Food for Family and Friends** (Pavilion, £14.95) which appears more Anglo-Indian than previous works but is intended to communicate a lighter and more elegant style of cooking than the corner Tandoori: artichokes with ginger butter, for example, or salmon steaks with a minty yoghurt sauce, or green beans with two mustards.

The snob book of the year is **My Gastronomy** by Nico Ladenis (Ebury Press, £16.95). This culinary guru tells of his horror when Edwina Currie came for lunch at Simply Nico and mashed up her food with her fork. It's precisely what she does with people's sensibilities, however, and a discriminating restaurateur should have expected no less. Ladenis is otherwise a great individual with exacting views based on simple common sense. He writes forcefully and is to be generously applauded for cutting through the arrogance of foodies (whom he detests) and the ignorant sycophancy towards the flavour of the month at which the expense-account diner excels. There is much in his book that is entertaining. I must be the only food writer who has never eaten his food, but Richard Olney in his foreword calls Nico a loveable genius who creates transcendental meals. You can hardly have higher praise than that. □

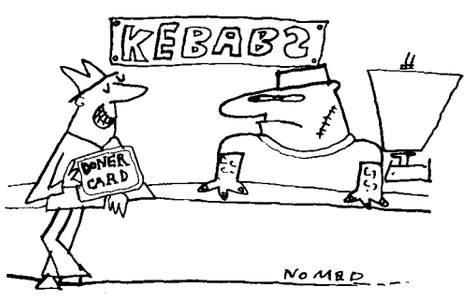
Weekend competition

No 2999 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

You did so well with the haiku recipes that we thought that we'd stretch you a bit. How about a mystery/thriller/detective story in limerick form? Max. three limericks (one limerick per story) by Wednesday 11 November.

No 2996 **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Fiction classics re-written for Ladybird.



Report **By Babe Bio**

Only one more Comp to go and we're *three thowsand weeks old*. Makes you feel kinda giddy, doesnernt it. Well, not me, to be strickly truthful; this hole magazine's so fixed on annerverseries — the Rushern Revolushon, 1968, its own coming 75th — that its head's in danjer of getting stuck the rong way round on its neck. But anyway, on with the motley, which most of your entries were. (You'd better wotch out or Gray'll start shaking his fist at you once again.) The stories below were the only ones from which a Ladybird wouldn't have flown away home. Ten quid a head to their orthors.

Long ago there was an enormous whale. He was white and lived near America so he was happy. He was called Moby Dick because of the lovely games he played with little lady whales. One day a sailor-man called Captain Ahab, who had a beautiful ivory leg, set sail to find Moby Dick. Once, Moby had chased Captain Ahab in the sea for fun but Captain Ahab was frightened and nearly lost his head. (That means he got too excited.) Now he wanted to tell Moby it was naughty to frighten people. When he found him there was lots of splashing and shouting but it all ended happily because Moby went to Heaven. Of course, Captain Ahab did too.

PETER ALEXANDER

'Happy Christmas!' said someone.

It was Scrooge's nephew. Scrooge looked at him crossly. 'Christmas is *peppermint*,' he said.

Scrooge's nephew was warm from walking quickly, and his face was all pink. 'Christmas a peppermint?' he said, puzzled. 'Do you mean that?'

'Yes,' said Scrooge. 'It's silly to talk about Christmas being happy. You're too poor to be happy.'

'You're too rich to be miserable!' laughed his nephew.

Scrooge couldn't think of a clever answer so he just said, 'Oh, peppermints!' again. Then he said, 'People who go round saying Happy Christmas are just silly old puddings.'

Scrooge's nephew looked upset. 'I think Christmas is quite nice,' he said.

Scrooge's secretary thought so, too, but she didn't like to say.

ALISON PRINCE

'Now,' said Mr O'Brien, when they were sitting comfortably, 'I'll ask you again. Are you going to play with Big Brother?'

'No!' yelled Winston. 'No!'

Mr O'Brien looked very tired and fed up. He said: 'But Big Brother wants you to come to his party.'

'Won't!' shouted Winston. 'Won't won't won't!!'

Mr O'Brien fiddled with his big spectacles. 'Well, what do you want to do?'

Winston thought. 'I want to play with Julia.'

Mr O'Brien shook his head. 'Julia's told me she doesn't like you anymore.'

Winston began to cry. To cheer him up Mr O'Brien said: 'I know, Winston, do you want to see my pet rats?'

Winston stopped crying straightaway. 'Yes, *please*,' he said.

NICK WRAY

When a young man comes to live near you, you want to make friends with him. So when Mr Bingley came to Longbourn, Mrs Bennet hoped he would meet her daughters. She had five daughters. They were called Jane, Lizzy, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. Jane was very pretty. Lizzy was very clever. Mary loved books and the others loved parties.

So when Mr Bingley gave a party, their Daddy went to see him to make sure they were asked. Mr Bingley danced with Jane but his friend Mr Darcy wouldn't dance with Lizzy. Everybody said he was rude but Lizzy laughed. Can you see Lizzy laughing?

CAROLYN BECKINGHAM

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Tocatta Graphics, Tabard House, London SE1
Printed by BPCC Colchester Web Offset Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ (Tel. 577881), a member company of BPCC Printing Corporation plc.
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.

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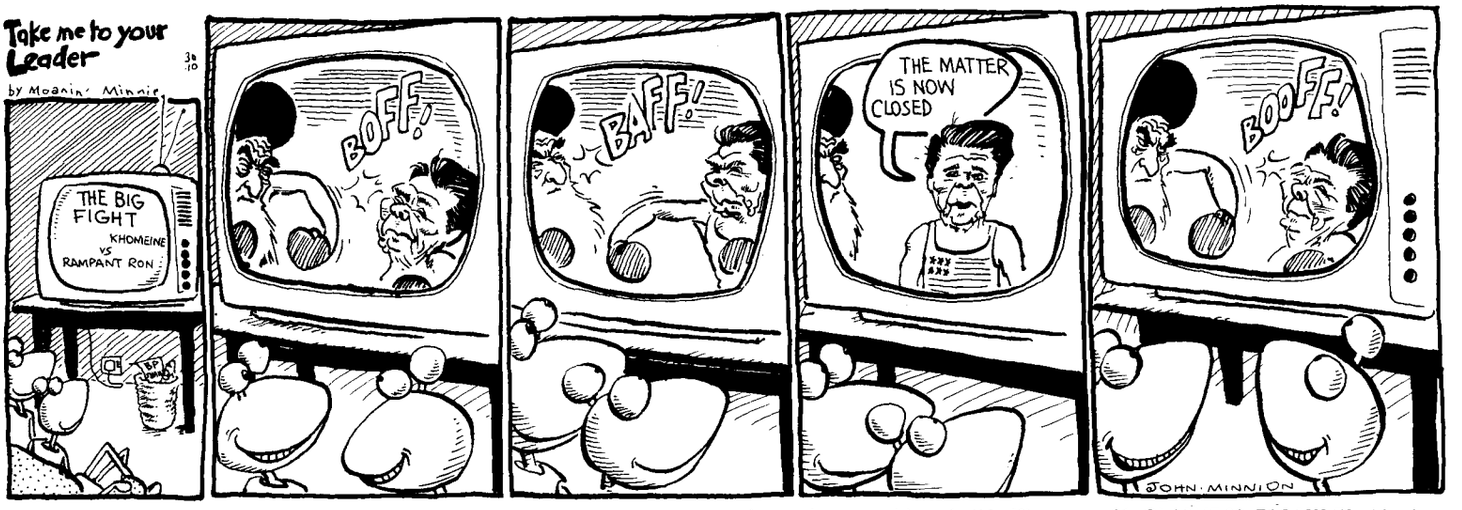


Chess

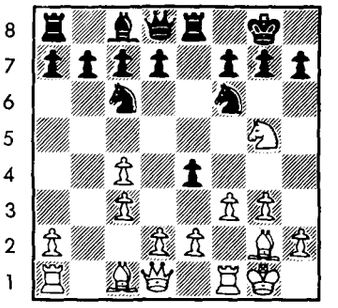
THE DIAGRAM shows the battlefield for the first two decisive games of the Kasparov-Karpov match in Seville, a position in the English Opening after **1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. g3 Bb4 5. Bg2 0-0 6. 0-0 e4 7. Ng5 Bxc3 8. bxc3 Re8 9. f3**

White's objective is to exchange off Black's e-pawn and then take control with his mass of central pawns, e.g. 9 . . . exf3 10. Nxf3 d5 11. cxd5 Nxd5 12. e4! Nb6 13. d4 with a clear advantage (Uhlmann-Smyslov, Hastings 1972-3). In a later game Smyslov showed that Black could play more combatively with 11 . . . Qxd5! 12. Nd4 Qh5 13. Nxc6 bxc6 14. e3 (14. Bxc6? Qc5+) Bg4 — far from clear, but at least Black has chances on the K-side. Since this is well-known, Kasparov must have had something special ready. But in the second game of the match Karpov surprised everyone by refusing to exchange on f3: **9 . . . e3!**? You can find opening books in which 9 . . . e3 is curtly dismissed as inferior because of 10. d3. Now the authors have to think again! **10. d3 d5 11. Qb3 Na5 12. Qa3 c6 13. cxd5 cxd5 14. f4 Nc6** Black hasn't been punished for 9 . . . e3 — his advanced post is under no immediate threat(15. Rf3 d4). But I don't think there is much wrong with White's game yet. It is Kasparov's next three moves that do the damage. **15. Rb1 Qc7 16. Bb2 Bg4 17. c4?** Breaks open the game and shatters Black's K-side pawns, but unfortunately also loses control of the centre. A spot of centralisation with 17. Nf3 was called for. **dxc4 18. Bxf6 gxf6 19. Ne4 Kg7 20. dxc4** White would have more tactical chances after 20. Qb2 or 20. Nd6. Kasparov must have missed the force of Karpov's next move. **Rad8!** So calm, so simple. I like the way Karpov keeps finding more important things to do than . . . Bxe2. Note that if now 21. Qxe3? Bf5 pins and wins. **21. Rb3 Nd4 22. Rxe3 Qxc4** Black's pieces dominate, in fact the whole game is a lesson in the value of centralisation. Perhaps Karpov could have got away with grabbing material — 22. Nc2 23. Qc3 Nxe3 23. Nxf6 Kg6 or 23. Qxf6+ Kf8. But why allow White any chances? **23. Kh1 Nf5 24. Rd3 Bxe2** He captures the pawn at the most telling moment. White cannot prevent an invasion of his first two ranks. **25. Rxd8 Rxd8 26. Re1 Re8 27. Qa5 b5 28. Nd2 Qd3 29. Nb3 Bf3! 30. Bxf3 Qxf3+ 31. Kg1 Rxe1+ 32. Qxe1 Ne3 0-1**. If 33. Qd2 Qf1 mate or if 33. Qf2 Qd1+.

Now comes the riddle of Seville. Karpov bashes out a move previously frowned on by theory. Kasparov is manifestly discomforted, thinks for more than an hour over his reply (10. d3), runs desperately short of time, and is beaten out of sight over the board. Yet at the very next opportunity Kasparov repeats his opening moves *and Karpov doesn't play 9 . . . e3*. Why not? The players and/or their seconds must have found something for White. I suspect that the improvement is 10. d4, with 11. Qd3 to follow, making a determined effort to consume the e3 pawn. Of course, 10. dxe3 also has to be considered, though both 10 . . . h6 11. Nh3 d6 and 10 . . . d5 11. cxd5 Nxd5 12. Ne4 Na5 seem promising for Black. At any rate, whatever the secret refutation is, Kasparov's persistence scared Karpov off:

Kasparov-Karpov, Game 4, 19 October
9 . . . exf3 10. Nxf3 Qe7 This has been played before, with miserable results. **11. e3 Ne5** Trying to improve on the routine 11 . . . d6 12. d3 Bg4 13. h3 Bd7 14. e4 etc. But I would say 11 . . . Qc5 is the only move that might justify Black's 10th. **12. Nd4!? Nd3** 12 . . . Nxc4 13. Nf5 was dangerous, but this is hardly more satisfactory. **13. Qe2 Ncx1 14. Raxc1 d6 15. Rf4 c6 16. Rcf1 Qe5 17. Qd3 Bd7 18. Nf5!** Kasparov plays this phase of the game brilliantly. Allowing Black to exchange his Bishop for the centralised Knight might be bad if it were not so good! **Bxf5 19. Rxf5 Qe6 20. Qd4! Re7 21. Qh4 Nd7 22. Bh3 Nf8** Black's pieces are in a horrid tangle and White is able to force the win of a pawn. **23. R5f3 Qe5 24. d4 Qe4 25. Qxe4 Rxe4 26. Rxf7 Rxe3 27. d5 Rae8 28. Rxb7 cxd5 29. cxd5 R3e7 30. Rfb1 h5 31. a4 g5 32. Bf5 Kg7 33. a5 Kf6 34. Bd3 Rxb7 35. Rxb7 Re3 36. Bb5 Rxc3 37. Rxa7 Ng6 38. Rd7 Ne5 39. Rxd6+ Kf5 40. a6 Ra3 1-0**. Adjourned and resigned by Karpov without resuming — 41. Be2 followed by Rd8 is one way to win.

A win apiece. But Karpov's chances of regaining the title must be slim if all the interesting play continues to be concentrated in the games in which Kasparov has White.



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Tel: 01-739 3211 (Editorial & Administration)
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London E2
© 1987 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: John Lloyd; **Deputy Editor:** John Rentoul; **Books & Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland); **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork will only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA: air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

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☐ Bosses scattered rice and saki to ward off evil spirits before starting work at a new Mitsubishi plant at Bridgend, South Wales.—*Daily Mirror* (Jean M. Johnston)

☐ British businessmen are rushing to fill a massive shortage in the French food industry — snails! A group have formed Britsnail, an organisation with 90 members throughout the home counties and spokesman Richard Davies from Cardiff said: 'There is now a shortfall in France of between three and seven thousand tonnes of snails every year. If we don't plug that gap the Greeks or Turks will get in there first.'—*Derby Evening Telegraph* (Derek Morgan)

☐ The anti-poll tax lobby should be careful before citing a hot new statistic in their war against the charge in Scotland, where it is soon to be test-driven. In the latest issue of *Consumer Voice*, Scottish Consumer Council Chairman Barbara Kelly says that enforcing the tax through seizure of goods will be difficult as many of the 18-24 age range 'own nothing worth more than £20'.—*Daily Telegraph* (George Moor)

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